Hindu ethics

John McKenzie

THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

EDITED BY

J. N. FARQUHAR, M.A., D.Litt.

LITERARY SECRETARY, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS, INDIA AND CEYLON

AND

H. D. GRISWOLD, M.A., Ph.D.

SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

ALREADY PUBLISHED

INDIAN THEISM . .	By NICOL MACNICOL, M.A., D.LITT. Pp. xvi+292.
THE HEART OF JAINISM	By Mrs. SINCLAIR STEVENSON, M.A., Sc.D. (Dublin). Pp. xxiv+336.
THE TREASURE OF THE MAGI.	By JAMES MOULTON, D.LITT., D.D., D.C.L. Pp. xv+273.
REDEMPTION: HINDU AND CHRISTIAN.	By SYDNEY CAVE, D.D. (Lond.). Pp. xii+263.
THE RELIGIOUS LITERATURE OF INDIA.	By J. N. FARQUHAR, M.A., D.LITT. (Oxon). Pp. xxviii+451.
THE RITES OF THE TWICE-BORN.	By Mrs. SINCLAIR STEVENSON, M.A., Sc.D. (Dublin). Pp. xxiv+474.

IN PREPARATION

THE RELIGION OF THE ṚIGVEDA.	By H. D. GRISWOLD, M.A., PH.D., Saharanpur.
BUDDHISM	By K. J. SAUNDERS, M.A., Berkeley, California.
THE VEDĀNTA . . .	By W. S. URQUHART, M.A., D.PHIL., Calcutta.
ISLAM IN INDIA . .	By M. T. TITUS, M.A., Moradabad.

EDITORIAL PREFACE

THE writers of this series of volumes on the variant forms of religious life in India are governed in their work by two impelling motives.

I. They endeavour to work in the sincere and sympathetic spirit of science. They desire to understand the perplexingly involved developments of thought and life in India and dispassionately to estimate their value. They recognize the futility of any such attempt to understand and evaluate, unless it is grounded in a thorough historical study of the phenomena investigated. In recognizing this fact they do no more than share what is common ground among all modern students of religion of any repute. But they also believe that it is necessary to set the practical side of each system in living relation to the beliefs and the literature, and that, in this regard, the close and direct contact which they have each had with Indian religious life ought to prove a source of valuable light. For, until a clear understanding has been gained of the practical influence exerted by the habits of worship, by the practice of the ascetic, devotional, or occult discipline, by the social organization and by the family system, the real impact of the faith upon the life of the individual and the community cannot be estimated; and, without the advantage of extended personal intercourse, a trustworthy account of the religious experience of a community can scarcely be achieved by even the most careful student.

II. They seek to set each form of Indian religion by the side of Christianity in such a way that the relationship may stand out clear. Jesus Christ has become to them the light

of all their seeing, and they believe Him destined to be the light of the world. They are persuaded that sooner or later the age-long quest of the Indian spirit for religious truth and power will find in Him at once its goal and a new starting-point, and they will be content if the preparation of this series contributes in the smallest degree to hasten this consummation. If there be readers to whom this motive is unwelcome, they may be reminded that no man approaches the study of a religion without religious convictions, either positive or negative: for both reader and writer, therefore, it is better that these should be explicitly stated at the outset. Moreover, even a complete lack of sympathy with the motive here acknowledged need not diminish a reader's interest in following an honest and careful attempt to bring the religions of India into comparison with the religion which to-day is their only possible rival, and to which they largely owe their present noticeable and significant revival.

It is possible that to some minds there may seem to be a measure of incompatibility between these two motives. The writers, however, feel otherwise. For them the second motive reinforces the first: for they have found that he who would lead others into a new faith must first of all understand the faith that is theirs already—understand it, moreover, sympathetically, with a mind quick to note not its weaknesses alone but that in it which has enabled it to survive and has given it its power over the hearts of those who profess it.

The duty of the Editors of the series is limited to seeing that the volumes are in general harmony with the principles here described. Each writer is alone responsible for the opinions expressed in his volume, whether in regard to Indian religions or to Christianity.

THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

HINDU ETHICS

A HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL ESSAY

BY

JOHN McKENZIE, M.A.
WILSON COLLEGE, BOMBAY

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW COPENHAGEN
NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPE TOWN
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS SHANGHAI
1922

PRINTED IN ENGLAND
AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
BY FREDERICK HALL

TO

AGNES FERGUSON McKENZIE

Philosophy
Sotheran
4-4-24
9309

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

THE subject of Hindu Ethics is one which in its whole range has not so far been submitted to scientific investigation, though many writers have dealt with aspects of Hindu ethical teaching, and studies of Hindu religion have generally involved some consideration of the bearings of religious doctrine on the moral life. The attempt is here made to fix attention more definitely on the ethical side of Hindu teaching. The aim of the writer has been to present the subject in a way that will make it intelligible to the ordinary educated reader, particularly to the educated Indian. He has sought at the same time, however, to maintain scientific accuracy in his discussion, and he hopes that he may have been able to contribute something to the study of a subject which he cannot but believe to be of the highest importance scientifically and practically. He believes, on the one hand, that some knowledge of Hindu thought should be of the greatest value to the Western student of ethics, for he has the feeling that Western ethical thinking has suffered from a certain insularity, which acquaintance with other systems of thought and life should help to remove. On the other hand, he believes that it is important that thoughtful Hindus should have their attention directed to the principles on which their practical life is based. He does not expect that all will agree with him in the conclusions to which he has been led, but he will have achieved something if he is able to lead some to examine for themselves the great questions on which he has touched.

The subject is a very large one, and there are parts of it which in themselves would have furnished material for

exhaustive treatises. The plan has, however, been adhered to, of giving a general conspectus of Hindu ethical thought and submitting it to some critical examination. The work is in no real sense of the term a History of Hindu ethics. Indeed, it may be doubted whether there is any history that might be properly so called in Hindu ethical thought. The subject of morality has not been in India an independent subject of speculation, and the intellectual principles which underlie Hindu practice are expressed in the main incidentally in connexion with religious and philosophical discussions. So what is here presented is rather a study of phases of Hindu ethical thought than a history.

BOOK I. EARLY ETHICS

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF ETHICAL THOUGHT IN THE *ṚIG VEDA*

THE *Ṛig Veda* may seem a somewhat barren field for the study of Ethics. There is in it no ethical speculation in the strict sense, and even moral conduct receives but small attention. It may be said without exaggeration that none of the questions treated in modern European ethical works have yet been raised. There is no discussion of the moral end; there are no problems arising out of seemingly conflicting duties, nor regarding the relation of the individual to society. And yet in any study of Indian ethical thought we shall find it desirable to begin with the *Ṛig Veda*, for we shall find there the springs of the ethical thinking as well as of the religious thinking of the Hindus. The river of Hinduism has followed a strangely tortuous course, in which it has been fed by many streams, but at every point it retains something of the character of those springs in which it took its rise. There are no doubt many ethical conceptions in modern Hindu thought that we shall not be able to trace back to the Vedas, but on the other hand there are many that we can so trace back, and there are others that are less direct developments of tendencies that may be discovered there. In the history of Greek philosophy we find in the ethical maxims, crude and fragmentary as they are, of the Seven Wise Men, the germs of ethical ideas developed in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle; and the task which we here undertake is one which is parallel to that undertaken by historians of Greek thought.

There is a further consideration that makes it imperative that we should begin our study of the history of Hindu ethics with the *Ṛig Veda.* Ethics for most European students means the ethical systems wrought out by Ancient Greek and Modern European philosophers. And these again presuppose the civilization, social organization, and, to put it broadly, the whole culture of these comparatively limited sections of human society. The thought of Ancient Greece and Modern Europe represent, indeed, but a single stream of thought. It is a stream that has been joined by many tributaries. Yet the thought and life of Modern Europe are so related to those of Ancient Greece that the modern student readily feels himself at home in the study of the latter.

When we turn to Indian literature, on the other hand, we find a civilization, social organization, and intellectual outlook, that in their character were almost as remote from those of the West, and that until modern times were as free from the influence of the West as we can well imagine. In thinking of the ethical problems that confront us in Western thought, we are apt to forget how much is presupposed in the very setting of these problems. The setting is familiar to us, and consequently its significance tends not to be fully recognized. But in studying the problems of Indian ethical thought we shall at every point be conscious of the need of understanding the conditions under which they arose, especially the religious and social conditions. A study of Indian ethics will, accordingly, involve some study of problems not themselves strictly ethical, and also some study of conditions that held prior to the rise of ethical speculation proper. In undertaking this study, it will be necessary for us to seek in the Vedas and in other Indian literature the germs from which ethical ideas developed, and also to exhibit features of Indian life and thought, the connexion of which with our subject may seem even more remote.

The *Ṛig Veda* consists of hymns addressed to the gods, hymns of praise and prayer. Most of the gods were originally

personifications of natural phenomena. In some cases the connexion has become obscure, and in almost all cases features have been introduced into the characters of the gods that cannot be shown to have any connexion with the original physical phenomena. Yet the characters and in many cases the names of the gods point to such an original identification.

Such a natural polytheism, if nothing more could be said regarding it, could not obviously form a foundation for any satisfactory ethic, nor indeed for a very satisfactory morality. The absence of unity in the universe as it is conceived by the strict polytheist, the existence of Powers antagonistic to each other, or at any rate not united in purpose; these are features characteristic of all systems of natural polytheism that we know. Such a religious outlook cannot have as its counterpart a conception of the ideal life as a unity in which the unifying principle is a single absolute good. In Greece, for example, it was only when the religious myths came to be regarded as myths that ethical speculation in the strict sense began. The myths of the *Ṛig Veda* represented to the ancient Aryan almost literal truth, and consequently we cannot expect to find in the Hymns ethical speculation of a very advanced order.

In the character of the Vedic gods the moral features are far less prominent than the physical. The gods are not generally conceived as immoral. There are no doubt stories related of some of the gods that reveal moral imperfection. In the character of Rudra there are features of a sinister order. He sends plagues upon man and beast; he is a robber, a deceiver, and a cheat. He is, generally, the god of destruction, a god to be feared and held in awe, as able to inflict or avert evil. To his sons, the Maruts, similar qualities belong in a less degree. 'Before the Maruts every creature is afraid.'[1] Yet even in these gods we find qualities of a higher ethical value. Rudra is celebrated as a healer as well as a destroyer; he both heals, and possesses and grants to men healing remedies.

[1] *ṚV.* i. 85. 8, Griffith's Trans.

These are the only gods in whom evil qualities are markedly obtrusive. It is characteristic of the Vedic gods rather that ethical qualities find but comparatively little place in their characters. We may read hymn after hymn without coming to a single moral idea or epithet. Praise of the power and skill of the gods, prayer for temporal benefits, and celebration of the power of the sacrifices, these are the chief themes of the *Ṛig Veda*. Yet all this has to be qualified. The religion of the *Ṛig Veda* is not a crass polytheism. In certain notable ways its polytheism is modified. First of all, the gods are not in all cases sharply distinguished from one another. There are gods with identical qualities so that one or another god may be invoked indifferently. Again there are pairs and larger groups of gods with identical qualities, who are invoked jointly, as for example Indra-Agni, Indra-Soma, and Mitra-Varuṇa. Even more important than this is the fact that the worshipper tends to attribute to the god whom he addresses the qualities not of a god but of God. This is the tendency that Max Müller has characterized as Henotheism.[1] It is most marked in the case of certain gods, notably Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, and Agni. The names of the various gods are but names under which a single Reality is invoked. The following passages illustrate the tendency:

> They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and he is heavenly, nobly winged Garutmān.
> To what is One sages give many a title: they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.[2]

Again two gods are regarded throughout the *Ṛig Veda* as occupying a position higher than the others. Varuṇa is the greatest of the gods. The pre-eminence that belongs to him is not represented by the number of hymns addressed to him, for in this respect he ranks behind several other gods, but it lies in the supreme moral authority that resides in him. Indra, on the other hand, is celebrated as, in a special degree,

[1] *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 40. [2] *ṚV.* i. 164. 46.

the possessor of power. With Varuṇa is very frequently conjoined Mitra, who is hardly recognized as having any separate character. The home of Mitra-Varuṇa is in heaven.[1] There they sit in their golden dwelling-place, supporters of mankind.[2] Their eye is the sun, and with it they watch mankind. To Mitra-Varuṇa the Sun reports the deeds of men, watching the deeds of living creatures like a herdsman.[3] In the fields and houses their spies keep unceasing watch,[4] and their spies are true and never bewildered.[5] Nothing can happen without Varuṇa's knowledge, or without his sanction. Even the gods themselves follow his decree.[6] These are but some of the functions that mark him out as supreme.

Indra, as has been said, is celebrated as the possessor of power rather than as a moral ruler. It was he who conquered Vṛitra, a deed which is celebrated in many hymns, and it is deeds like this that are typical of his character. He is also praised as liberal in the gifts that he bestows on men. In the later parts of the *Ṛig Veda* there are passages where features of a more distinctively moral nature are ascribed to him, but over against these there are others where deeds of a less worthy kind are described. It is very significant that by the time when the *Atharva Veda* was composed, Indra's position had been raised and Varuṇa's lowered: the supreme place in the pantheon, occupied in the *Ṛig Veda* by one who was pre-eminently the moral ruler of the universe, had been usurped by one whose special qualification was the possession of power, exercised non-morally. In this fact there are implications that will claim our attention later.

We have so far said nothing of a conception that has far more importance than any other for our ethical study of the *Ṛig Veda*, the conception of *Ṛita*. This is a term which it is difficult to translate by any single English equivalent, but which we shall try to explain. It is usually rendered 'Law' or 'Order' by English translators of the Vedas, 'Ordnung' by

[1] *ṚV.* i. 136. 2.
[2] *ṚV.* v. 67. 2.
[3] *ṚV.* vii. 60. 1–3.
[4] *ṚV.* vii. 61. 3.
[5] *ṚV.* vi. 67. 5.
[6] *ṚV.* viii. 41. 7.

the Germans. It represents in a way both natural and moral order, and also that order which characterizes correct worship of the gods through sacrifice and prayer and all else that belongs to service of the gods. The idea does not emerge for the first time in the *Ṛig Veda*, but has been traced back to Indo-Iranian times. It is the *Asa* of the Avesta, and is identical with the *arta* in such Persian names as Artaxerxes and Artaphernes. But in the *Ṛig Veda* it has a new richness of content. It is through *ṛita* that the rivers flow; the dawn is born of *ṛita*; by *ṛita* the moon and stars keep their courses. Again 'under the yoking of *ṛita*' the moon and the stars keep their courses. Again 'under the yoking of *ṛita*' the sacrificial fire is kindled; by *ṛita* the poet completes his hymn; the sacrificial chamber is designated the 'chamber of *ṛita*'. These, chosen almost at random, are illustrations of the functions of *ṛita* as cosmic order and as the order that is involved in the proper expression of man's relation to the gods. But these two senses in which the term is used are not clearly distinguished from one another, nor from the third sense of moral order. It is the same law or order that governs the course of nature, that is involved in the right ordering of the sacrifice, and that is manifested in the moral law. It is to this last aspect of *ṛita* that we must here specially direct our attention. But it will not always be possible to keep the different aspects apart from each other. The 'lords of order' are pre-eminently Varuṇa and Mitra.

> Those who by Law uphold the Law, Lords of the shining light of Law,
> Mitra I call and Varuṇa.[1]

But the same function is attributed to many other gods, notably to the other members of the group known as the Ādityas. It is, however, pre-eminently Varuṇa who is the guardian of *ṛita* in the sense of moral order, and it is specially

[1] *ṚV.* i. 23. 5.

as the possessor of this supreme moral authority that he is celebrated as the chief of the gods. Indra is represented as saying:

> But thou, O Varuṇa, if thou dost love me,
> O King, discerning truth and right from falsehood, come and be
> Lord and Ruler of my kingdom.[1]

We do not look for strict consistency of thought in the Vedas, and no doubt numerous passages may be quoted in which other gods are given the supremacy. But the tendency is to attribute the pre-eminence to Varuṇa, and this in virtue of his ethical qualities, because he is guardian of *ṛita.*

While recognizing this, we must be careful not to understand *ṛita* viewed as moral order, as possessing the full connotation that the term 'moral order' has in modern speech. Bloomfield surely goes too far when he says that 'we have in connexion with the *ṛita* a pretty complete system of Ethics, a kind of Counsel of Perfection'.[2] Language such as this is, to say the least of it, misleading. Any *system* of ethics that might be discovered in the *Ṛig Veda* is of a very rudimentary sort. Yet it is very significant that at this early stage we should find such a unifying conception as that of Law or Order, pervading all things, expressing itself in the order of nature and in the manifestations of man's religious life, and tending to be associated with one Supreme God. It is a conception that might seem to be full of hope for the future of the religious and ethical development of the people of India. But unfortunately long before the Vedic period ended other conceptions had arisen and displaced it, and in the history of Indian ethical thought it has not been upon the idea of an overruling God, righteous in Himself, seeking righteousness of His people, and helping them in the attainment of it, that the moral life has been grounded.

When we inquire further as to the content of *ṛita* thus

[1] *ṚV.* x. 124. 5.

[2] *Religion of the Veda*, p. 126.

viewed ethically, we find that *ṛita* is specially identified with truth.

> All falsehood, Mitra-Varuṇa, ye conquer, and closely cleave unto the Law eternal.[1]
> Far from deceits, thy name dwelleth in holy Law.[2]

The Laws of Varuṇa are 'ever true'.[3] We may indeed say that truth is the law of the Universe; it is the foundation not only of moral but of cosmic order.

> Truth is the base that bears the Earth.[4]
> From Fervour kindled to its height, Eternal Law and Truth were born.[5]

And more striking than any of the other passages quoted is the description of Mitra-Varuṇa as 'true to Law, born in Law, the strengtheners of Law, haters of the false'.[6]

Beyond this identification of *ṛita* with truth there is little definite mention of ethical qualities that go to form its content. The 'pretty complete ethical system' of which Bloomfield speaks certainly is not more than an embryonic one. We have references to Bṛihaspati, the 'upholder of the mighty Law' as 'guilt-scourger' and 'guilt-avenger'[7]; the Ādityas, 'true to eternal Law', are the 'debt-exactors'[8]; the prayer is offered to Varuṇa that he would loose the worshipper 'from sin as from a bond that binds me: may we swell, Varuṇa, thy spring of Order'.[9] We find these and other gods besought to loose their worshippers from sin and to forgive sin. It is clear enough that *ṛita* stands for moral order and is opposed to sin or unrighteousness, but we search in vain for clear indications as to forms that conduct in accordance with *ṛita* takes as against conduct that is sinful. Not only so, but in following the scattered hints that we find as to the content of morality, it is difficult to discover any guiding thread. The conception of *ṛita* is so wide in its application that it loses correspondingly in depth.

[1] *ṚV.* i. 152. 1.
[2] *ṚV.* v. 44. 2.
[3] *ṚV.* v. 63. 1.
[4] *ṚV.* x 85. 1.
[5] *ṚV.* x. 190. 1.
[6] *ṚV.* vii. 66. 13.
[7] *ṚV.* ii. 23. 17.
[8] *ṚV.* ii. 27. 4.
[9] *ṚV.* ii. 28. 5.

On the other hand, when we approach the problem of the content of morality from the point of view of the 'good', we get as little satisfaction. For the writers of the Vedic hymns there were many goods, equally the objects of prayer to the gods—health, length of life, offspring, victory over enemies, skill in warfare, honour, freedom from sin. The goods that they sought were mainly those obvious goods that appeal to a comparatively undeveloped people. The virtues and vices that are definitely mentioned are such as have a bearing on life lived in pursuit of these simple ends. Following what scattered hints are to be found as to the content of the moral life, we may note in the first place that it is probable that moral duties were regarded as being owed only to one's own people. In one place we are given a classification of sins as those committed 'against the gods, our friend, and our house's chieftain',[1] and again we have a reference to sins committed against 'the man who loves us . . . a brother, friend or comrade, the neighbour ever with us or a stranger'.[2] The stranger here referred to is no doubt the stranger within one's gates of one's own race. On the other hand, the Dasyus, the aboriginal inhabitants of the land, are contrasted with the Āryas as a wicked and godless people, and to them no special duty is recognized.[3]

Again in the small list of moral duties that we can put together, those that have to do with religious observance occupy, naturally, a prominent place. Liberality towards the priests is an important duty.

> Agni, the man who giveth guerdon to the priests, like well-sewn armour thou guardest on every side.[4]

There are many eulogies of the liberal man, among the most notable being that of the hymn to Dakshiṇā,[5] and the hymn in praise of Liberality.[6] In the latter, especially, we have the idea of liberality freed very largely from sacerdotal implica-

[1] *ṚV.* i. 185. 8.
[2] *ṚV.* v. 85. 7.
[3] E.g. *ṚV.* i. 51. 8.
[4] *ṚV.* i. 31. 15.
[5] *ṚV.* x. 107.
[6] *ṚV.* x. 117.

tions. 'The riches of the liberal', it is said, 'never waste away.'

> The man with food in store, who, when the needy comes in miserable case begging for bread to eat,
> Hardens his heart against him—even when of old he did him service, finds not one to comfort him.[1]

The grounds on which the duty is inculcated in this hymn are utilitarian, but it is likely that these utilitarian considerations are a later support to a duty, the significance of which was at first religious. This idea of liberality is one that found a place permanently in the thought and practice of the Hindu people, and all through it retains something of its original character.

Ṛita has been shown to be identified with truth: truth is a principle that belongs to the constitution of the universe. As a natural application of this, truthfulness is demanded of man, and lying is condemned as a sin. In one prayer[2] the Waters are entreated to remove far from the worshipper the sin of lying or false swearing. The sin of 'injuring with double tongue a fellow mortal'[3] is held up for condemnation. We meet in one hymn the protest, 'I use no sorcery with might or falsehood', and the indignant exclamation, 'Agni, who guard the dwelling-place of falsehood? Who are protectors of the speech of liars?'[4] In a notable hymn Indra-Soma are praised as in a special way the supporters of truth and enemies of falsehood. Soma slays him who speaks untruly, and protects that which is true and honest. The prayer is offered that the speaker of untruth may be 'like water which the hollowed hand compresses'. And special punishment is invoked on false accusers.[5]

Crimes of fraud and violence are condemned. To injure with double tongue a fellow mortal, 'to cheat as gamesters cheat at play', to lay a snare for another, to threaten another without offence of his, to be evil-minded, arrogant, rapacious,

[1] *ṚV.* x. 117. 2. [2] *ṚV.* x. 9. 8. [3] *ṚV.* i. 147. 5.
[4] *ṚV.* v. 12. [5] *ṚV* vii. 104.

are sins against one's fellow-men that are held up to reprobation. The hatred even of foemen is more than once referred to as sinful. The adversary, thief, and robber, those who destroy the simple and harm the righteous, the malicious—upon these judgement is invoked.

Notable also is the place that is given to friendship. In a hymn to the praise of Vāch (speech),[1] it is said that he who has abandoned his friend who knows the truth of friendship has no part in Vāch; 'naught knows he of the path of righteous action'.

In all this there is nothing specially significant. The virtues and vices are such as we expect to see marked in such an early type of society; they are such as are connected with the very coherence of a society maintaining itself amid hostile peoples.

This brief discussion may help us in considering the idea of sin that is so prominent in some parts of the *Ṛig Veda*. We must be careful not to read into it all that belongs to the same conception in Modern Europe. It includes not only moral failure, but laxity and error in the performance of religious duties. It may be not only the outcome of conscious choice but may be committed sleeping as well as waking,[2] in ignorance as well as with full knowledge.[3] One may be involved in the sin of others, so as to suffer for it, notably 'sins committed by our fathers'.[4] Sin which one has committed clings to one like a disease.

> Provide, O Soma-Rudra, for our bodies all needful medicines to heal and cure us.
> Set free and draw away the sin committed which we still have inherent in our persons.[5]

The sinner is bound as with fetters that he cannot shake off[6]; 'he is caught as in a noose'.[7] Further, sin is regarded as disobedience of the commands of the gods, especially of Varuṇa, though also of Indra, Agni, and other gods,[8] and this

1 *ṚV.* x. 71.
2 *ṚV.* x. 164. 3.
3 *ṚV.* vii. 89. 5.
4 *ṚV.* vii. 86. 5.
5 *ṚV.* vi. 74. 3.
6 *ṚV.* ii. 28. 5.
7 *ṚV.* vi. 74. 4.
8 *ṚV.* ii. 28. 5, &c.

disobedience leads to anger on the part of the god and to punishment.[1]

What was the nature of the punishment meted out to the sinner? It would seem that in places the doctrine of future punishment in Hell is taught, for example in the following passage:

> Like youthful women, without brothers, straying, like dames who hate their lords, of evil conduct,
> They who are full of sin, untrue, unfaithful, they have engendered this abysmal station.[2]

This abysmal station is probably rightly interpreted as *narakasthānam* or hell. Similarly, in another passage, Indra-Soma are prayed to 'dash the evil-doers into the abyss, into bottomless darkness, so that not even one of them may get out'.[3] But more frequently in the *Ṛig Veda* we have the idea of punishment without these eschatological implications. In many passages it is indicated that the wages of sin is death, but frequently the punishment is executed by the hands of men, to whom the gods hand over the wicked. Indra is besought to 'discern well the Āryas and the Dasyus; punishing the lawless, to give them up to him whose grass is strewn',[4] i.e. to him who sacrifices to the god. Again, Brahmanaspati is referred to as 'Guilt-scourger, guilt-avenger, who slays the spoiler, and upholds the mighty law'.[5] Again, it is said that he 'punishes the spiteful'. The 'prison of the gods'[6] is mentioned along with that of 'mortals' as the punishment of sin. In these and in many other passages, the nature of the punishment is vague and indefinite. The injured god may work out his purposes in punishing sin, through men, or in other ways by sending misfortune, sickness, or death to the sinner.

While the idea of punishment is prominent in parts of the *Ṛig Veda*, the ideas of release from sin and forgiveness of sin

[1] *ṚV.* ii. 29. 5. [2] *ṚV.* iv. 5 5. [3] *ṚV.* vii. 104. 3.
[4] *ṚV.* i. 51. 8. [5] *ṚV.* i. 190. 5. [6] *ṚV.* iv. 12. 5.

are hardly less prominent. We do not find a sense of the guilt of sin comparable to what we find in Christian literature, or in the Psalms. We find nothing like the cry of the Psalmist, burdened with a sense of guilt, 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight'. In the *Ṛig Veda* the sting of sin seems to lie chiefly in the punishment which it brings with it, and the typical form of prayer regarding sin is that the worshipper may be freed from punishment. There are no doubt passages that would suggest a deeper sense of the significance of guilt, notably in prayers to Aditi and Varuṇa, who are implored to release from sin. Professor Macdonell has pointed out that while many gods are petitioned to pardon sin, 'the notion of releasing from it is much more closely connected with Aditi and her son Varuṇa, whose fetters that bind sinners are characteristic, and who unties sin like a rope and removes it'.[1] We find passages such as this:

> Loosen the bonds, O Varuṇa, that hold me, loosen the bonds, above, between, and under.
> So in thy holy law may we, made sinless, belong to Aditi, O thou Āditya.[2]

Aditi and Varuṇa are doubtless pre-eminently the releasers from sin, but the same function is less frequently attributed to Agni, Aryaman, and other gods.

The power of forgiving sin belongs to many gods, to Varuṇa, Aditi, Agni, Mitra, Savitṛi, Aryaman, Sun, Dawn, Heaven, and Earth. The following passages are typical:

> Pardon, we pray, this sin of ours, O Agni,—the path which we have trodden, widely straying.
> Dear Friend and Father, caring for the pious, who speedest nigh and who inspirest mortals.[3]
> If we, men as we are, have sinned against the gods, through want of thought, in weakness, or through insolence,
> Absolve us from the guilt and make us free from sin, O Savitṛi, alike among both gods and men.[4]

[1] *Vedic Mythology*, p. 121.
[2] *ṚV.* i. 24. 15.
[3] *ṚV.* i. 31. 16.
[4] *ṚV.* iv. 54. 3.

The distinction between the two functions of forgiving and releasing is after all not very fundamental. Sin is conceived as something that, once committed, continues, and adheres to a man; and this is characteristic of sin committed in ignorance as well as of sin committed insolently, of sin committed by another which has been transmitted to a man as well as of sin committed by one's self. It is a thing, the presence of which works evil, and the worshipper prays that it may be removed, that he may be freed both from it and its consequences.

We meet in the *Ṛig Veda* the germ of two ideas that are in some ways more significant than anything that we have yet discussed. Perhaps most noteworthy of all is the idea of *tapas*, which is not by any means prominent in the *Ṛig Veda*, but which appears in the late tenth book. It is an idea of such great importance in the development of Indian thought and practice, that it is necessary that attention should be drawn to it here. We are told in the Creation Myth that it was through *tapas* that the Primal Being began to create.[1] By *tapas ṛita* was produced.[2] Indra conquered heaven by means of *tapas*.[3] Again, the practice of *tapas* leads to the reward of heaven.[4] The first meaning of the word *tapas* is heat, and in the passages referred to this original meaning is still prominent. Then it came to be applied specially to the heat or fervour of devotion; and lastly we have the familiar meaning of austerity or self-mortification. We can hardly read this last meaning into any of the uses of the term in the *Ṛig Veda*. But it is noteworthy that in one hymn at any rate in the tenth book there are described to us some of the ascetic practices that came later to be connected with *tapas*. *Ṛ V.* x. 136 is a hymn in praise of the long-haired Munis, wearing soiled garments of yellow hue, wandering about upon the earth, who have thus attained fellowship with the deities of the air. Here we have an idea foreign to the other books of the *Ṛig Veda*, but an idea which once introduced was destined to remain and to develop.

[1] *Ṛ V.* x. 129. [2] *Ṛ V.* x. 190. [3] *Ṛ V.* x. 167. 1. [4] *Ṛ V.* x. 154

Another idea which is even less obtrusive in the *Ṛig Veda* contains the germ of a still more significant ethical conception. Sacrifice is known as *ishṭā* and the presents given to the priests as *pūrta*. To him who offers sacrifices and gifts the gods grant their favour.

> Indra aids him who offers sacrifices and gifts: he takes not what is his and gives him more thereto.
> Increasing ever more and more his wealth, he makes the pious dwell within unbroken bounds.[1]

Ishṭā and *pūrta* became compounded into a single word, *Ishṭāpūrta*, and one's *Ishṭāpūrta*, what one has given in sacrifice and in presents to the priests, comes to be regarded as having separate, substantial being. With this the pious are united after death.

> Do thou join the Fathers, do thou join Yama, join thy *Ishṭāpūrta* in the highest heaven.[2]

This was the germ from which the idea of Karma was later developed. Its content became deepened so as to include not merely one's sacrifices and gifts, but one's whole activity. And its significance changed with the emergence of belief in transmigration. But the essential idea remained in it—of something stored up in life, a sort of bank on which one should draw after death. The idea of Karma has been perhaps the most significant and determining in the development of ethical thought in India.

[1] *ṚV.* vi. 28. 2.

[2] *ṚV.* x. 14. 8.

CHAPTER II

MAGIC AND SACRIFICE

In the literature that stands nearest to the *Ṛig Veda* we are brought face to face with a world of thought in which there is little place for ethical conceptions. Magical and sacrificial ideas obscure almost everything else. The literature in which these ideas find expression is very extensive, and it is not our intention to undertake any detailed study of it. Hillebrandt has analysed it in his *Ritual-Litteratur*, and a study of that work reveals to one the extraordinary ramifications of the ideas. All that we propose to do here is to look at these ideas as they find expression in early Vedic literature, and to try to bring out the bearing which they have on ethical thought. In the *Atharva Veda* we have the great text-book for the study of ancient Indian magic, and in the *Yajur Veda* and the Brāhmaṇas for the study of sacrifice. We may take their teaching as representative of these points of view, reserving the other literature for merely passing reference.

Turning first to the *Atharva Veda*, we cannot but be struck by the extraordinary difference in its tone from that of the *Ṛig Veda*. The gods of the *Ṛig Veda* are still recognized, and the worshipper invokes them: but, apart from changes that their characters have undergone, to which reference will be made later, the place of the gods has become a subordinate one. The distinction in point of view may be brought out by saying that whereas in the *Ṛig Veda* religion was largely objective, in the *Atharva Veda* it is very largely subjective. The worshipper in the *Ṛig Veda* no doubt usually had in view his own temporal advantage; yet he entered into the worship of the gods with an abandon that served to redeem his religion from selfishness. In the *Atharva Veda*, on the other hand,

personal profit comes first and last, and the gods are reduced to the level of mere instruments to be used for the attainment of this profit. The conception of the gods as free personal beings has almost disappeared, and in their place we have magical forces which the individual seeks to utilize in order to gain his own selfish ends. The hymns consist mainly of prayers, charms, and imprecations with a view to the attainment of such objects as the healing of disease, long life, prosperity, the discomfiture of enemies and rivals, freedom from the power of demons and evil charms, the expiation of sin, and the like.

It is obvious even to a superficial reader that we are here in contact with a world of thought that has much in common with the thought of primitive peoples generally. Yet it is certain that the *Atharva Veda* in the form in which it has come down to us belongs to a later period than the *Ṛig Veda*. The fact is that we have here a great mass of magic and superstition that found its origin in the minds of the people long before the period of the *Ṛig Veda*, wrought up at a later time by the hands of the priests. Barth has drawn attention to the fact that the Ṛig Vedic hymns acknowledge no wicked divinities and no mean and harmful practices, except for one or two fragments which serve to prove the existence alongside of its loftier religion of a lower order of religious thought. The priests of a later period, ever eager to attain complete ascendency over the minds of the people, took the direction of these magical forces, which played so large a part in the religion of the common people, into their own hands, wrought them into a framework of Vedic thought, and above all established their own position in relation to the magical rites as agents without whose mediation the rites could have no efficacy. So, even more important than the charms and spells themselves are the Brāhmans who control them. As Oldenberg has put it, the centre of gravity, so far as meritorious conduct is concerned, has been shifted from worship of the gods to the giving of presents, of food, and of honour to the Brāhmans.

We found in studying the ethical standpoint of the *Ṛig Veda* that one of the most important features to be considered was connected with the conception of the gods, and that especially in their representation of Varuṇa and Mitra the hymn-writers showed the rudiments of an ethical conception of the Divine. In the *Atharva Veda* there are some traces of this same spirit. We meet such passages as the following:

> I reverence you, O Mitra-and-Varuṇa, increasers of right; who, accordant, thrust away the malicious; who favour the truthful one in conflicts; do ye free us from distress.[1]

or,

> Much untruth, O King Varuṇa, doth man say here; from that sin do thou free us, O thou of thousandfold heroism.[2]

We have also the remarkable passage which speaks of Varuṇa's omniscience and of the fetters which he binds on him who speaks untruth.[3] The smallest details of human conduct, the standing, the walking, even the winking of men he sees, helped by his thousand-eyed spies who look over the earth. 'What two, sitting down together, talk, king Varuṇa as third knows that.'[4] But these are isolated passages. It can hardly be maintained that even in the *Ṛig Veda* the characters of any of the gods are thoroughly ethicized, while even in the case of those gods whose characters are most ethically conceived the significance of the fact is considerably modified by the consideration that alongside them there are other gods whose characters are deficient in ethical traits. But when we turn to the *Atharva Veda* we find, in spite of some passages such as those quoted above, that the gods have almost completely lost their ethical character, and that their physical qualities are most prominent. The de-ethicizing process is manifested in another way. In the *Ṛig Veda* the most impressive figure is Varuṇa, the upholder of *ṛita*. In the *Atharva Veda* he sinks into comparative insignificance, and no god is endowed with

[1] *A V.* iv. 29. 1. [2] *A V.* xix. 44. 8. [3] *A V.* vi. 121. 1.
[4] *A V.* iv. 16. 2.

the moral supremacy among the gods which belonged to him. Prajāpati, Lord of creatures, and Indra, who is regarded as the 'heavenly prototype of the earthly king',[1] are the most important gods, and these are gods in whom ethical qualities are almost entirely lacking. So it may fairly be maintained that the tendency towards an ethical, almost Hebrew conception of the divine, that is evident in parts at least of the *Ṛig Veda*, hardly appears in the *Atharva Veda*.

Again it is important to observe that in the *Atharva Veda* the importance and power of the gods have very greatly decreased. They have become not merely less moral, they have become less real. There has risen up a great crop of all kinds of spiritual beings, possessed of powers that may be used for the benefit or injury of man. The *Ṛig Veda* knows little of this world of spirits, which has now come to usurp many of the functions of the gods, and it is not only these spirits that are ousting the gods. The cultus itself is now being given a new importance. The tendency now is to regard prayer, ritual, and sacrifice, not as means whereby the worshipper is brought into touch with gods who are free personal beings, but as themselves powers alongside the gods and spirits. So the gods tend to fall more and more into the background.

It is obvious that in all this we have conditions that were bound to have a profound effect on the moral ideas and practices of those who accepted these religious ideas. We are dealing with a Universe in the constitution of which ethical ideas have no sure place. The Universe is not even reasonable. There are in it all kinds of capricious powers, which if offended will inflict injury on one. And the kinds of actions through which they are placated or offended do not depend for their efficacy on any moral value that belongs to them but on considerations largely accidental. The outcome of this is an ethical point of view in which judgements of good and evil are determined in a way very different from that of modern European ethics. A quotation from Dewey and Tufts'

[1] Bloomfield, *Atharva Veda*, p. 74.

Ethics will help to make clearer to us the distinctive character of this outlook. They say:

> There are two alternatives in the judgement of good and evil. (1) They may be regarded as having *moral* significance, that is, as having a voluntary basis or origin. (2) Or they may be considered as substantial properties of things, as a sort of essence diffused through them, or as a kind of force resident in them, in virtue of which persons and things are noxious or helpful, malevolent or kindly. . . . The result is that evil is thought of as a contagious matter, transmitted from generation to generation, from class or person to class or person; and as something to be got rid of, if at all, by devices which are equally physical.[1]

This quotation describes fairly accurately the conception of good and evil that is characteristic of the *Atharva Veda.* Oldenberg brings out an idea essentially the same in his conception of a *Zauberfluidum.*[2] In the *Ṛig Veda,* he says, sin is pre-eminently disobedience to the divine will, and reconciliation is attained through the placating of God by means of gifts and other marks of submissiveness. But when sin is thought of as a sort of magical substance that becomes attached to one, freedom from it is to be attained through the manipulation of those magical forces that are fitted to remove it. So it is chiefly in the charms prescribed for the expiation of sin and defilement that the Atharva Vedic conception of good and evil is made plain, and to some of the points of significance in these we must turn our attention now.

That there are traces of the higher way of conceiving good and evil has already been remarked. But this lower conception, by which sin is regarded as something quasi-physical, is more characteristic of the *Atharva Veda.* Sin is something that a man may fall a victim to without willing it. In many of the hymns it is associated with or even identified with disease and worldly misfortune. There are many prayers to

[1] Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics,* pp. 457–8.
[2] Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda,* pp. 317–18.

the gods in which protection is sought in the same breath from sin, disease, and misfortune. For example:

> Let whatever sacrifices I make make sacrifice for me; let my mind's design be realized; let me not fall into any sin soever; let all the gods defend me here.
>
> On me let the gods bestow property; with me be blessing, with me divine invocation; may the divine invokers win that for us; may we be unharmed with our self, rich in heroes.[1]

Again:

> From Kshetriya (probably a scrofulous disease), from perdition, from imprecation of sisters, from hatred do I release thee, from Varuṇa's fetter; free from guilt I make thee by my incantation; be heaven and earth both propitious to thee.[2]

And again:

> Free from defilement are the waters; let them carry away from us defilement:
>
> Let them carry forth from us sin; let them carry forth evil dreaming.[3]

Sin is regarded too as something almost contagious, passed on from one being to another. In a hymn to be used in connexion with the binding on of an amulet, protection is sought from a great variety of evils, including diseases, sorcery, and enemies. In the middle of the hymn is found this verse:

> What sin my mother, what my father, and what my own brothers, what we ourselves have done, from that shall this divine forest-tree shield us.[4]

The evil infection may be conveyed to men even by the gods, e.g.

> On Trita the gods wiped off that sin; Trita wiped it off on human beings.
>
> . . . .
>
> Twelvefold is deposited what was wiped off by Trita—sins of human beings.[5]

[1] *AV.* v. 3. 4. 5. [2] *AV.* ii. 10. 1. [3] *AV.* xvi. 1. 10f.
[4] *AV.* x. 3. 8. [5] *AV.* vi. 113. 1. 3.

Such sin communicated by the gods to men may cause mania. See, for example, the expression:

Crazed from sin of the gods, crazed from a demon.[1]

Sin then is viewed quasi-physically, being identified with many actions or even passive experiences that have no strictly ethical significance at all, and being communicable through physical means. It may be of interest to look somewhat more closely at the kinds of actions or occurrences that are so identified with sin. Evil dreaming has been already referred to as frequently mentioned together with sin. So are personal misfortunes of many kinds—the hatred of others, their curses, being the victim of sorcery, the influence of demons, ill omens, notably birds of ill omen, against which there are several hymns. It is not so remarkable that many hymns should deal with the subject of the right performance of the sacrifice and of religious ceremonies generally, and that release should be sought from the effects of errors in their performance, as from sins. That such occurrences are not distinguished from what we should recognize as moral faults is clear from certain passages. We find, for example, being the victim of curses, and association with the dark-toothed, ill-nailed, and mutilated, put alongside evil doing, in a prayer to the plant *apamārga* for cleansing:

Since thou, O off-wiper, hast grown with reverted fruit, mayest thou repel from me all curses very far from here.

What is ill done, what pollution, or what we have practised evilly—by thee, O all-ways-facing off-wiper, we wipe that off.

If we have been together with one dark-toothed, ill-nailed, mutilated, by thee, O off-wiper, we wipe off all that.[2]

When we turn to the more distinctively moral ideas of the *Atharva Veda*, we find that they are but few. Only slight mention is made of what we should call virtues and vices.

[1] *AV.* vi. 111. 3. Whitney, however, translates, 'Crazed from sin against the gods'.

[2] *A V.* vii. 65.

The virtue most frequently mentioned is perhaps that of truth-speaking, while falsehood is as frequently condemned. The speaker of untruth is kept in the toils of Varuṇa, who, again, is besought to release from untruth.

> In that thou hast spoken with the tongue untruth, much wrong—from the king of true ordinances, from Varuṇa, I release thee.[1]

Mitra and Varuṇa are especially celebrated as the 'increasers of right', in particular thrusting away the malicious, and favouring the truthful in conflicts. Similarly Soma is mentioned as being on the side of the truth-speaker:

> It is easy of understanding for a knowing man that true and untrue words are at variance; of them what is true, whichever is more right, that Soma verily favours; he smites the untrue.
>
> Soma by no means furthers the wicked man, nor the *Kshatriya* who maintains anything falsely; he smites the demon; he smites the speaker of untruth; both lie within reach of Indra.[2]

Again truth is spoken of as one of the elements that sustain the earth.[3] It is not surprising to find truth spoken of in this way. It is a fundamental virtue, the recognition of which in some way is essential for the existence of any kind of social life. It is one of the few recognized virtues that such a writer as Nietzsche, who in modern times has departed so far from traditional morality, admits into his ethical system, and its recognition in the elementary ethical thought of the writers of the *Atharva Veda* is as little to be wondered at as its inclusion in the ethical code of the superman.

Of the few other virtues and vices to which reference is made, those connected with liberality and niggardliness are among the most prominent. Here we see the influence of the Brāhmans. Niggardliness on the part of the sacrificer towards the priest interferes with the success of the sacrifice, and the influence of the niggard is even more subtle and widespread still, marring the success of the plans of men generally.

[1] *AV.* i. 10. 3. [2] *AV.* viii. 4. 12. 13. [3] *AV.* xii. 1. 1.

> Likewise, greatly making thyself naked, thou fastenest on a person in dreams, O niggard, baffling the plan and design of a man.[1]

Departure from the niggardy is praised:

> Thou hast left niggardy, hast found what is pleasant; thou hast come to the excellent world of what is well done.[2]

In seeking protection from the wrath of the gods the writer of one hymn prays:

> Be yon Rāti (liberality) a companion for us.[3]

We have an idea, which may be allied to this idea of the importance of liberality, expressed in a number of passages in which entertainment of guests is praised. In one passage, for example, it is said that he whose food is partaken of by guests has his sins devoured.[4]

A number of hymns consist of charms for the securing of concord or harmony, especially within the family. One of the most touching hymns in the whole *Atharva Veda* is that beginning:

> Like-heartedness, like-mindedness, non-hostility do I make for you; do ye show affection the one toward the other, as the inviolable cow toward her calf when born.
>
> Be the son submissive to the father, like-minded with the mother; let the wife to the husband speak words full of honey, wealful.
>
> Let not brother hate brother, nor sister sister; becoming accordant, of like courses, speak ye words auspiciously.[5]

Harmony in wider relationships is also sought. For example:

> Harmony for us with our own men, harmony with strangers, harmony, O Aśvins, do ye here confirm in us.[6]

Other strictly ethical qualities mentioned in the *Atharva Veda* are neither numerous nor significant. Unfulfilled promises (vi. 119), offences at dice, adultery (vi. 118), failure to return what is borrowed (vi. 117), these are marked as sins that require expiation.

[1] *A V.* v. 7. 8.
[2] *A V.* ii. 10. 7.
[3] *A V.* i. 26. 2.
[4] *A V.* ix. 6. 25.
[5] *A V.* iii. 30. 1–3.
[6] *A V.* vii. 52. 1.

It is important to observe that throughout the *Atharva Veda* it is always as something that has to be expiated that sin is mentioned. The methods by which it is supposed that this expiation may be achieved do not concern us here. But it may be remarked that as sin is conceived quasi-physically, so the means of expiation (*prāyaśchitti*, *prāyaśchitta*) are also physical or quasi-physical. Water especially is used for the removal of sins; as also are plants.

> From sin against the gods, against the Fathers, from name-taking that is designed, that is devised against any one, let the plants free thee by their energy, with spell, with milk of the seers.[1]

Uttered spells, amulets, and fire have the same efficacy. Through these and other instruments the stain is believed to be destroyed or wiped away or removed to a distance. The gods too have their place in connexion with the releasing from sin, though it is a subordinate place. The god Agni, in particular, is frequently appealed to for deliverance. But the power lies rather in the prayer itself than in the god who is invoked.

Attention has already been drawn to the use of the term *tapas* in the last book of the *Ṛig Veda*. It is prominent also in the *Atharva Veda*. The practice of penance is supposed to give one standing with the gods and power to attain one's desires. The following passage is typical:

> In that, O Agni, penance with penance, we perform additional penance, may we be dear to what is heard, long-lived, very wise.
>
> O Agni, we perform penance, we perform additional penance—we, hearing things heard, long-lived, very wise.[2]

Filled with *tapas*, the Vedic student 'goes at once from the eastern to the northern ocean'.[3] The same austerity is supposed to be practised by the gods and to be to them a source of power.

> By Vedic studentship, by fervour, the gods smote away death; Indra by Vedic studentship brought heaven for the gods.[4]

[1] *A V.* x. 1. 12. [2] *A V.* vii. 61. [3] *A V.* xi. 5. 6.
[4] *A V.* xi. 5. 19.

The practice of *tapas* in the *Atharva Veda* has very little ethical significance. The term may usually be translated by penance or mortification, but it is self-mortification with a view to the acquisition of magical powers. Dr. Geden mentions as characteristic of the magical power that came to be ascribed to *tapas* the fact that the passage in the *Ṛig Veda* (vii. 59. 8), rendered 'kill him with your hottest bolt', is altered in the *Atharva Veda*, vii. 77. 2, 'kill him with your hottest penance'.

There is still no trace in the *Atharva Veda* of the doctrine of transmigration. Reward and punishment is reserved for heaven and hell. Heaven is especially the reward of those who give liberal gifts to the priests. There, freed from bodily infirmities, sickness, and deformity, they meet father, mother, wives and children (vi. 120. 3; xii. 3. 17; iii. 28. 5). It is a place of delights; all the pleasures of the senses are at their disposal (iv. 34. 2. 4, 5, 6). Distinctions of wealth and power are done away (iii. 29. 3). Hell (*Narakaloka*, the place below), on the other hand, is a place of torture—of lowest darkness (viii. 2. 24). It is the abode of weakness, hags, and sorceresses (ii. 14. 3). With great detail the tortures suffered by those who injure a Brāhman are described; they sit in the midst of a stream of blood, devouring hair, subjected to gruesome tortures (v. 19. 3).

Our brief study of the ethical ideas of the *Atharva Veda* will have shown that there is represented in it a view of life that is morally very low. The ethical way of regarding good and evil has largely given place to a point of view from which good and evil are conceived almost physically. They have been confused with a great variety of occurrences that have no ethical significance at all. This unethical attitude to human experience has certain obvious consequences. There are certain elementary virtues that are necessary to the very existence of society. Truthfulness in certain relationships, at any rate, and harmony are among the most fundamental of these, and we are not surprised accordingly to find them

valued. But the magic and witchcraft in which the minds of the writers were steeped led to many strange judgements regarding goods and evils. Spells, incantations, curses, and the like are good when used for one's own benefit, evil when used against one. And so over against these spells and curses we have prayers and charms for the discovery of sorcerers and practisers of witchcraft, and against cursers and their curses. With utter shamelessness charms are laid down for the infliction of injury on others—imprecations to spinsterhood, spells to prevent the success of an enemy's sacrifice, to cause diseases in an enemy, and so forth. The good tends to be conceived purely selfishly, for the constitution of the Universe leaves very little place for a good in which men share in common. Long life, health, success over enemies, superiority in the assembly, success in love, skill in gambling, worldly prosperity, and such like personal benefits are the objects chiefly sought, and these are objects the attainment of which is conceived as possible not chiefly through the orderly regulation of social life, but through the exercise of mysterious powers over which the individual may acquire mastery. The principles of the *Atharva Veda* involve as their foundation an anarchical view of the cosmos, and if carried to their logical conclusion they would lead to the disruption of the social order. But in reality there was no period in which they were predominant; they represent an attitude of mind no doubt very common but not determinative completely of the life and thought of the time when they were enunciated.

In close connexion with magical ideas and practices are those connected with sacrifice. They are closely related with each other, but they must not be confused. Oldenberg has drawn attention to an important distinction between them.[1] He maintains that there is an essential distinction between

[1] *Die Religion des Veda*, p. 313. A similar distinction has, however, been drawn by several earlier writers. See Fraser, *The Golden Bough*, vol. i, chap. iv.

the proceeding of one who seeks to win a god to his side through gifts, and that of one who burns an image of his enemy or a lock of his hair in the belief that he is so consigning the enemy himself to destruction. The one attains his end indirectly, through inclining to himself the will of a powerful ally; the other attains it directly, through an impersonal concatenation of causes and effects. He admits that as an actual fact it is often difficult to draw a sharp line between the two provinces; in practice they have frequently interpenetrated, and this interpenetration has been due to various causes. Into these causes it is not necessary for us to enter, but it is important to observe that in the Vedic sacrificial literature the sacrificial idea has been, to say the least of it, largely influenced by magical ideas.

The *Ṛig Veda* deals very largely with the Soma sacrifice, and in it the influence of magical ideas is not very marked. The gods are conceived as free personal beings against whose wills men may offend or whose wills they may fulfil, and in whose power it is to send misfortunes or to grant favours to men; and sacrifices are offered to them with a view to conciliating them or with a view to receiving benefits from them. When we turn to the sacrificial literature proper, for example to the *Yajur Veda* and the Brāhmaṇas, we find a very different attitude to sacrifice. Even in the *Yajur Veda* the sacrifice is no longer an offering to the gods as free personal beings, but something that has power in itself. As Professor Macdonell says: 'Its formulas, being made for the ritual, are not directly addressed to the gods, who are but shadowy beings having only a very loose connexion with the sacrifice.'[1] The same is true of the Brāhmaṇas. What has been said in connexion with the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* in particular is true of the attitude to sacrifice in the sacrificial literature generally:

> The sacrifice is regarded as the means for attaining power over this and the other world, over visible as well as invisible beings, animate as

[1] Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 4.

well as inanimate creatures. Who knows its proper application, and has it duly performed, is in fact looked upon as the real master of the world; for any desire he may entertain, if it be even the most ambitious, can be gratified, any object he has in view can be obtained by means of it. The *Yajña* (sacrifice), taken as a whole, is conceived to be a kind of machinery, in which every piece must tally with the other, or a sort of long chain in which no link may be wanting, or a staircase, by which one may ascend to heaven, or as a personage, endowed with all the characteristics of a human body.[1]

When sacrifice has assumed such a significance as this it approximates very closely to magic. The divorce between religion and morality in the Brāhmaṇas is almost as complete as in the *Atharva Veda*. Through the correct performance of sacrifices one can attain one's ends; but what ends? Certainly not the attainment of righteousness. The destruction of guilt is frequently sought, but sin and guilt have been so unethically conceived that not much can be built on that any more than in the *Atharva Veda*. The ends sought are mainly the selfish ends that have been marked in the literature already discussed. 'Adoration of the power and beneficence of the gods, as well as the consciousness of guilt, is entirely lacking (in the *Yajur Veda*), every prayer being coupled with some particular rite and aiming solely at securing material advantage.'[2] Nay further 'Religious rites are also prostituted to the achievement of criminal schemes'.[3] Take for example one passage, taken from among many of the same character:

The silent prayer is the root of the sacrifice. Should a Hotar wish to deprive any sacrificer of his standing place, then he must not at his sacrifice repeat the 'silent praise'; the sacrificer then perishes along with his sacrifice which thus has become rootless.[4]

Such a proceeding is elsewhere forbidden, but the significant

[1] Haug, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, vol. i, p. 73.
[2] Macdonell, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 183.
[3] Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 47.
[4] *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, i. 25.

fact is that such directions are laid down in the Brāhmaṇas at all; and while the use of such practices may be forbidden, they were nevertheless believed to be efficacious; and some, at any rate, approved of their use.

Taking such a phenomenon as this as illustrative of the unethical character of the religious observances dealt with in the sacrificial literature, we may proceed to consider certain other facts which are closely connected with this. It has been shown above that the gods have been pushed into the background, and that the place of the gods has been very largely taken by the sacrifice itself. Nevertheless the pantheon of the *Ṛig Veda* is recognized with few changes throughout all the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas. The very radical changes that have taken place have been in the characters of the gods and in the relative importance of the different gods. The gods have been to a very large extent de-ethicized, and the de-ethicizing process is seen in the prominence that is now given to the less respectable members of the pantheon. It was remarked in connexion with the *Atharva Veda* that the practical primacy among the gods had been yielded by Varuṇa to Prajāpati. In the *Yajur Veda* also he is recognized as the chief god, and in the Brāhmaṇas very emphatically so. Prajāpati's character is as far removed from that of Varuṇa of the *Ṛig Veda* as one could well imagine. For example, in various places in the Brāhmaṇas, and in various ways, the story of his incest with his daughter is recounted. Significant also is the prominence given to the Apsarases, heavenly nymphs of loose morals, and to the Asuras or demons, who are constantly at war with the gods. The unethical way of regarding the divine is reflected also in the absence of ethical qualities as a necessary qualification for the priest.

> Even if the performing priest is no proper Brāhman (in the strictest sense), or even pronounced to be an ill-reputed man, this sacrifice nevertheless goes up to the gods, and becomes not polluted by the contagion with a wicked man (as in this case the performing priest is).[1]

[1] *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, i. 16.

All this means that to the writers of the Vedic sacrificial literature the Universe was not constituted on ethical lines. Sacrifice itself is not necessarily an unethical thing; indeed it may be questioned whether sacrifice in some form is not an essential element in religion. But as it is here understood and practised it has no ethical significance. The fact that in the *Atharva Veda* the existence of the gods is recognized does not make the practices there described any less magical. Nor does the fact of the recognition of the gods in the *Yajur Veda* and the Brāhmaṇas give their sacrifices a character that essentially differentiates them from such magical practices. The distinction drawn by Oldenberg between sacrifice and magic is sound in theory, and applicable in the case of the sacrifices of the *Ṛig Veda*; but in the case of the literature now before us it is not applicable. Sacrifice has itself become a magical thing, and ethical thought has been as completely stifled by these sacrificial ideas as it was by the magical ideas of the *Atharva Veda*.

While we recognize all this, it is necessary that we should give due attention to facts of a different character. We must not commit the error of supposing that in this sacrificial literature the whole life and thought of India of that period is represented. Here and there we see traces of the working of different and sometimes contradictory ideas. Notably we see sometimes asserting itself the idea that certain ethical qualifications belong to the characters of the gods and that the same qualities are necessary for the worshipper. In more than one place in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* reference is made to truth as one of the qualities that belong to the nature of the gods. For example:

> This vow indeed the gods do keep, that they speak the truth; and for this reason they are glorious; glorious therefore is he who, knowing this, speaks the truth.[1]

Again:

> Attendance on that consecrated fire means the truth. Whosoever

[1] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, i. 1. 1. 5.

speaks the truth acts as if he sprinkled that lighted fire with ghee. . . . Whosoever speaks the untruth, acts as if he sprinkled that lighted fire with water. . . . Let him therefore speak nothing but the truth.[1]

But reference to ethical ideas is rare. A few forms of action are condemned as sinful, but these are chiefly of the grosser sort. One of the chief sins to be condemned is adultery, and in one place confession is demanded of the sacrificer's wife at the time of the sacrifice as to her faithfulness to her husband, in order that she may not sacrifice with guilt on her soul.[2] Murder and theft and such violent crimes are condemned, but we can hardly claim that the condemnation of these reveals more than the most rudimentary ethical sense. Of moral actions that are praised among the most prominent are hospitality and honour to parents.

The treatment of the conception of *tapas* in the Brāhmaṇas calls for little special attention, though it occupies a place of high importance. We are told that the gods became divine through the practice of austerity,[3] and that by means of austerities the Ṛibhus obtained the right to a share in the Soma beverage.[4] The gods 'conquered by means of the sacrifice, austerities, penances, and sacrificial oblations the heavenly world'.[5] For purposes of creation Prajāpati underwent austerities,[6] and on one occasion he practised such austerities that lights, the stars which we now see, came forth from all the pores of his body.[7] From austerities the divine Ṛishis are born.[8] The significance of austerity on the part of men is not dwelt upon, and it is worthy of note that where it is mentioned it is recommended usually as a means for the attainment of selfish ends, for example fame.

A Brāhman who, after having completed his Vedic studies, should not attain to any fame, should go to a forest, string together the stalks of darbha grass, with their ends standing upwards, and sitting on the

[1] *Śat. Br.* ii. 2. 2. 19.
[2] *Śat. Br.* ii. 5. 2. 20.
[3] *Taittirīya Br.* iii. 12. 3. 1.
[4] *Ait. Br.* iii 30.
[5] *Ib.* ii. 13.
[6] *Ib.* ii. 33.
[7] *Śat. Br.* x. 4. 4. 2.
[8] *Ait. Br.* ii. 27.

right side of another Brāhman, repeat with a loud voice the Chaturhotṛi mantras. (Should he do so he would attain to fame.)[1]

On the other hand, criticism of the ascetic life is expressed:

> What is the use of living unwashed, wearing the goat-skin and beard? What is the use of performing austerities? You should wish for a son, O Brāhman.[2]

On the whole, the attitude to *tapas* is not essentially different from that in the *Atharva Veda.*

Attention has been drawn to the way in which during this period the ethical has been stifled by magical and sacrificial ideas. Another tendency closely connected with this begins to make its appearance definitely in the Brāhmaṇas. We frequently meet such sentences as these:—'He who has this knowledge conquers all directions', 'He who has such knowledge becomes a light among his own people', &c. . . . The place of such statements is not difficult to understand. Sacrifice is the most powerful means to the attainment of one's ends, and every step in the sacrifice must be observed with the greatest care. So knowledge of every step becomes of the highest importance. We have here an idea fraught with the greatest consequences for Indian religion and ethics, as we shall see in our study of the Upanishads. For it marks the beginning of that claim made for the supremacy of the intellectual attitude which is so characteristic of Indian thought.

The doctrines of karma and transmigration are still in an embryonic state. The reward of heaven and the punishment of hell still constitute important sanctions for right living. But right living generally means little more than right sacrificing. The reward of right sacrificing, according to the Brāhmaṇas, is union with the Sun, Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, Prajāpati, and other gods.[3] Life in the other world is not essentially different in kind from life in this world, and, in the

[1] *Ait. Br.* v. 23. [2] *Ib.* vii. 13. [3] *Śat. Br.* ii. 6. 4. 8.

eternal bliss there enjoyed, the joys of love are specially prominent. 'He who has such a knowledge lives in his premises in this world, and in the other with children and cattle.'[1] The tortures undergone by the wicked in hell are sometimes described. In one passage hell is represented as a place where the character of the punishment is determined by the principle of 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. 'So they have done to us in yonder world, and so we do to them in return in this world'[2] is the cry of men in hell who cut up and devour other men. In another passage we read of a rebirth in the other world after death when men are weighed in a balance and receive the reward or punishment of their deeds.[3]

But of far greater significance than all this are some passages that mark the beginnings of a different attitude to merit and demerit. For example, we have the words of the oath which the priest administers to the king before he performs the Mahābhisheka ceremony:

> Whatever pious works thou mightest have done during the time which may elapse from the day of thy birth to the day of thy death, all these together with thy position, thy good deeds, thy life, thy children, I would wrest from thee, shouldest thou do me any harm.[4]

Here good deeds are placed alongside position, life, and children, as something forming part of a man's property, which may be wrested from him. The idea is not an entirely new one. We have already seen how in the *Ṛig Veda* a man's *ishṭāpūrta* is conceived after the manner of a fund. But here the idea of his actions generally as forming a sort of a fund upon which he may draw seems to be crystallizing. The same tendency is revealed in another way. It is clear that if it be conceived that one's good works form a fund that is finite in amount, the fund may run low and finally be exhausted. This idea is actually expressed in places. For example, in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* ceremonies are men-

[1] *Ait. Br.* iii. 23.
[2] *Śat. Br.* xi. 6. 1. 4.
[3] *Ib.* xi. 2. 7. 33.
[4] *Ait. Br.* viii. 15.

tioned, the object of which is to secure that one's good works should not so perish, and that one should not undergo a second death. The conception of *karma* thus is becoming more definite, but it is not yet connected with the conception of *saṁsāra*. Still there are in the Brāhmaṇas foreshadowings of it also—at any rate the idea of rebirth on earth is mentioned. We are told that he who knows that the spring comes to life again out of the winter is born again in this world.[1] It is interesting to note that in this very early expression of belief in the possibility of rebirth, what in later thought is regarded as an evil and a punishment is bestowed as a reward. We have, however, in the same Brāhmaṇa a passage that takes us nearer to the fundamentals of the doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsāra* as they are familiar to us. It is said that man is born into whatever world is made by his acts.[2] The world referred to is not this world, but we can see how out of such a conception it was possible for the Indian mind to arrive at the doctrine that one's position in successive births on earth is determined by the actions which he performs. Most of the materials for the doctrine are present. The possibility of rebirth on earth is recognized, and so is the idea of the determination of his destiny by his conduct in this life. In the Upanishads the further step is taken and we have the characteristic doctrine of *karma* and *saṁsāra*.

[1] *Śat. Br.* i. 5. 3. 14. [2] *Ib.* vi. 2. 2. 27.

CHAPTER III

DHARMA

IT might, at first sight, seem reasonable, from the point of view of history, to pass next to the great speculative movement, the chief records of which are preserved in the Upanishads; since that movement clearly appeared before the Hindu law of conduct—*dharma*, was codified in the existing Sūtras; but the truth is that the *dharma* took shape at an earlier date than the philosophy of the Upanishads; and that it was side by side, and in a long process which lasted some three centuries, that the body of law and the body of thought and conviction gradually won their way to adequate expression in literature. The actual working out of the constituents of Hindu *dharma* took place in the minds of Brāhman priests and teachers in the age of the Brāhmaṇas.

Further, we are still in the realm of authority, and it is to authority that appeal is continually made in the literature which we propose now to study. Action precedes reflection, and the great mass of the rules which we shall find to have grown up in India are not the expression of ideals conceived by speculative thinkers, but, in the main, the outcome of custom, caste, and *karma*. At the same time, it is not pretended that speculation exercised no influence in their development. All that is maintained is that the actual social life of India took the form in which we propose now to study it in great measure independently of the currents of philosophical thought which were then in process. At all times speculation has been for the few. The multitude have been content to accept authoritative guidance for the conduct of their lives.

We have seen how willingly the people have submitted to the imposition of sacrificial and magical customs. It has not

been necessary for our purpose to deal with that subject except in a general way. Nor is it necessary for us to deal in detail with the developments that took place in connexion with such practices in later times. But there appeared in post-Vedic times a whole department of literature in which is gathered up all that had been taught and accepted in Vedic times regarding sacrifice, ritual, and practical life generally.[1] For the expression of all this in concise form, so that it might be as little burdensome as possible to the memories of those who had to remember it, a new literary form was invented—the *sūtra*. This is a literary form to which we have nothing parallel in our literature. The word itself is derived from the root *siv* = to sew, the word *sūtra* itself meaning a thread. The term *sūtra* is applied to a particular kind of short aphorism or rule, or to a book of such aphorisms, and the name may have come to be so applied either because each aphorism is a short line, or because the whole forms a string of aphorisms. In any case we have in the *sūtra*-literature an example of extraordinary brevity in expression ; into each single line there is compressed what would require a long sentence for expression in ordinary literary form. As Professor Macdonell has put it, the *sūtra* 'is so compressed that the wording of the most laconic telegram would often appear diffuse compared with it'. And he also refers to an aphorism, according to which the composers of grammatical *Sūtras* delight as much in the saving of a short vowel as in the birth of a son.[2]

The *sūtra*-form may have appeared about 500 B.C., and the first great class of *sūtras* is the Śrauta Sūtras, so called because based on *śruti* or revelation, in which are gathered up what is taught in the Brāhmaṇas regarding the performance of the greater sacrifices. Then, also dealing with ritual, but with the ritual of the rites to be performed in the household from day

[1] For a comprehensive study of this literature, see Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur*, *Vedische Opfer und Zauber*, and Jolly, *Recht und Sitte*, both in the 'Grundriss'.

[2] *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 36.

to day, we have the Gṛihya Sūtras. These are based on *smṛiti* or tradition. Then there is the great class of *sūtras*, which will demand our closer attention, those known as the Dharma Sūtras, dealing with *dharma*, a term to be explained presently. These too are based on *smṛiti*. Various other classes of works were produced in the *sūtra* form, but these we may pass over for the present.

We may pass over the Śrauta Sūtras, and there is not much in the Gṛihya Sūtras that need detain us; and what there is that has any significance for our study may be taken in connexion with other aspects of *dharma*. In the Gṛihya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras together we have an extraordinarily interesting and valuable source of information regarding the practices, ritual and ethical, followed by the people of ancient India in their daily lives. These works show but little evidence of the philosophical speculations that were agitating many minds at the time. Not that their authors were necessarily ignorant of, or uninfluenced by, the philosophical thought of their time; but these speculations were for the few, not for the many. For the many the old polytheistic faith, with all its rites and sacrifices and all the rest, had its value and its truth.

Passing from this general view of the character of the *Sūtra* literature, we may now try to define the term *dharma*, which is the subject of the class of *sūtras* with which we are now specially concerned. It is a word which is exceedingly difficult to translate, and one of the consequences of this has been that unscholarly and unscrupulous writers have sometimes used misleading English equivalents in their endeavours to establish their own theories. A recent writer, for example, says that *dharma* means the Law of Being, and that a man's *dharma* is his Ideal. The term has again been variously translated as Religion, Virtue, Law, and Duty. Now, all these words convey something of the meaning, but to use any one of them as an equivalent for it is highly misleading. Much confusion might be avoided if it were recognized once for all that the term *dharma*, as used at any rate in the Dharma Sūtras, was

applied to a condition of things to which modern terms like religion, virtue, and law are strictly speaking inapplicable. In India in those days no clear distinction was drawn between moral and religious duty, usage, customary observance, and law, and *dharma* was the term which was applied to the whole complex of forms of conduct that were settled or established. This is a fact which should contain no difficulty for those who have made even the slightest and most superficial study of the origin of moral ideas; yet it is one of those facts that many of those who have undertaken to expound Indian thought have failed to apprehend.

Various Vedic schools had their own bodies of *sūtras*, of which the *Śrauta Sūtra* formed the first and largest part; then came the *Gṛihya Sūtra*, and then the *Dharma Sūtra*. The whole body of *Sūtras* connected with religion belonging to a particular school was called the *Kalpa Sūtra* of that school. The Dharma Sūtras of only three Vedic schools have been preserved to us, viz. those of the Āpastambas, Hiraṇyakeśins, and Baudhāyanas. These all belong to the Taittirīya division of the *Black Yajurveda*. Along with these we must take the *Dharma Sūtra* of Gautama and the *Dharma Sūtra* of Vasishṭha; they are not connected with other *sūtras* in a *Kalpa Sūtra*, but they must have belonged to a Vedic school. Then more important perhaps than all the other writings that deal with *dharma* is the *Mānava Dharma Śāstra*, which has furnished scholars with a problem of very special interest. Before the introduction into India of the methods of Western scholarship, Hindu scholars universally regarded this work as containing the teaching of Manu, 'the son of the Self-existent', who received it direct from the Creator, Brahman. Modern scholars are now agreed that the *Mānava Dharma Śāstra* is a recast of an old *Mānava Dharma Sūtra*, a lost law-book of the school of the Mānavans, one of the families which gave themselves to the study of Vedic science. This *Dharma Śāstra* has been given a position of special authority by Hindus.

It must not be supposed that this short list exhausts the catalogue of 'legal' literature, which is very extensive. There is, for example, the very important *Vaishṇava Dharma Śāstra* or *Vishṇu Smṛiti* (*The Institutes of Vishṇu*), which attained its present form probably about A. D. 200; and many other Dharma Śāstras of later date. A full discussion of the legal literature is to be found in the first part of Jolly's *Recht und Sitte*.

There are many problems of a literary and critical kind connected with this *dharma* literature. These need not detain us here, for in discussing the ethical ideas embodied in it, within the limits which must here be observed, it will be impossible to do more than draw attention to certain features that characterize this whole class of literature, without entering into details in which different writings reveal peculiarities or inconsistencies with each other. In any case, it is important to note that the various Dharma Sūtras, while teaching much that would be generally accepted, in many details set forth teaching that would not be accepted outside their own school, or at any rate, which would not be universally accepted. In matters of detail each school freely criticizes the others. The *Mānava Dharma Śāstra* probably owes its authority partly to the fact that the compiler contrived to combine in it elements taken from other Dharma Sūtras besides that on which it is directly based, so producing a very compendious though not always self-consistent work on *dharma*. Its authority was still more strongly established as an outcome of the fiction by which it came to be connected not with the Mānavans but with Manu, the father of the human race.

The Law Books are among the most remarkable witnesses to the place that has been occupied by authority in the direction of the Indian mind. The same might be said in a sense regarding the Brāhmaṇas, but there we have seen authority operative in a more limited sphere. The Gṛihya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras presuppose the development, largely under the direction of the priests, of an extraordinary complex of

ritual and ethical forms to be observed in the daily life of the people. From the ethical point of view this is perhaps the most important aspect of this whole class of literature. So it is well that we should consider the peculiar character of this authority and the ways in which it is supported and maintained. These are two tasks which cannot be clearly separated from each other, but we shall endeavour as clearly as possible to indicate (1) the way in which the conduct of the individual was determined by authority, and (2) the means by which that authority was maintained.

Looking first at the peculiar character of the authority which determined the course of conduct, even the most casual reader must be impressed by the way in which the individual's course is mapped out for him. It may be doubted whether any other religious system has ever provided instructions for the conduct of life that have been so full and so detailed. The task that was set the individual may not unjustly be likened to that of the child who is given line pictures which he may colour for himself. He may vary the colouring according to his fancy, but the outline is provided. Perhaps this figure errs on the side of exaggerating the extent to which the individual is free. For on all sides and at every point the individual finds prescriptions of which he is the subject or the object. Before he is born, *dharma* has taken to do with him. Of the forty *saṁskāras* or sacraments which are prescribed in connexion with the more important changes in one's life, there are some that are prescribed for performance before one's birth and others after one's death. The ethical significance of this in itself is not great, but it is symptomatic of the way in which life has been overlaid with ritual. Then there is caste, with all the restrictions that it involves in so many different ways—in matters of food and social intercourse, occupation, and indeed in almost all departments of human activity. Then there are the four *āśramas*, now very definitely fixed. Life has become definitely divided into stages, each with its own complex of duties, and indeed there are few situations in any stage of life in connexion

with which the duty of the individual is not prescribed. It is particularly in the teaching regarding caste and the *āśramas* that the static character of Indian society is manifested. It is unnecessary for us here to examine the details of these prescriptions, for that would carry us into spheres that have no directly ethical significance, but it is desirable that we should give some attention to the ways in which through the operation of these institutions the activity of the individual was limited.

Taking caste first, we find that the peculiar position and functions of each of the four caste divisions are frequently explained with great fullness. The *Mānava Dharma-śāstra*, in the form in which it has come down to us, prescribes the forms of livelihood to be followed by the members of the different castes, and to this account there are parallels in other Śāstras.

> But in order to protect this Universe, He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet.
>
> To Brāhmans he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).
>
> The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.
>
> The Vaiśya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.
>
> One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the Śūdra, to serve meekly even these other three castes.[1]

But this is merely an outline prescribing in general terms the kinds of occupations which the different classes are to follow. There is an almost infinite number of regulations providing for the behaviour of the individual, prescribing the conduct which he is to follow in many relations within the caste, specifying offences which are to be punished by expulsion from the caste and penances that are to be performed with a view to readmission, showing the worth and standing of the different castes in relation to each other and the respect due by the lower to the higher. In a great multitude of subtle ways

[1] *Manu*, i. 87-91.

the place of the individual in the social organism is defined for him. Let us note only a few points by way of illustration.

The Brāhmans stand at the head of the organization, and the position and authority accorded to them are very remarkable:

> Know that a Brāhman of ten years and a Kshatriya of a hundred years stand to each other in the relation of father and son; but between these two the Brāhman is the father.[1]

The Kshatriya class, as the class which protects the world, is also to be held in high honour, though in honour much inferior to the Brāhman.

> A king and a Brāhman deeply versed in the Vedas, these two uphold the moral order in the world.[2]

The almost immeasurable superiority of the Brāhman even to the Kshatriya is partly expressed in the marvellous powers attributed to the Brāhman:

> Let him (the king) not, though fallen into the deepest distress, provoke Brāhmans to anger; for they, when angered, could instantly destroy him together with his army and vehicles.[3]

The Vaiśyas, the workers and traders, come next to the Kshatriyas. Their duties are of a humbler, though necessary kind, and as the performers of these duties they are sometimes classed with the Śūdras. If these two castes swerved from their duties the whole world would be thrown into confusion. But there is this vital distinction between the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras, that the former are classed with the Brāhmans and Kshatriyas as twice-born, i. e. they may undergo the ceremony of initiation which marks what is called the second birth, with all the social and religious privileges for which it qualifies one; while the Śūdras are cut off from these privileges. Only certain parts of the sacred law are to be fulfilled by them; they may not hear, learn, recite, or teach the *Veda*; and they are subjected to all manner of other disabilities. They are

[1] *Manu*, ii. 135. [2] *Gautama*, viii. 1. [3] *Manu*, ix. 313.

a despised, worthless, and unlucky class, 'created by the Self-Existent to be the slave of the Brāhman '.[1]

> That Kingdom where Śūdras are very numerous, which is infested by atheists and destitute of twice-born (inhabitants), soon entirely perishes, afflicted by famine and disease.[2]

These few quotations will perhaps serve to convey some meagre idea of the extraordinary way in which by caste the position and functions of the individual are determined for him.

Take all this in connexion with the rules prohibiting the mixing of castes, threatening terrible punishments and judgements to persons having marital intercourse with persons of other castes, and covering with shame the offspring of such mixed unions, and we realize how extraordinarily organized is the society which the Law Books represent. In any kind of society it is obviously essential that there should be some sort and degree of fixity in the matter of institutions and forms of social behaviour. But in any progressive society there must be liberty of action on the part of the individual, within limits; there must be for him the possibility of escape from the circle into which he is born into another and wider one. In all social life, as in all social theory, we see the struggle between the two tendencies, the tendency to change and the tendency to conserve, and it is always difficult to give to each that measure of influence which shall be best for society. The spirit of change run riot means social chaos, while the spirit of conservatism in its extreme expression means the suppression of most of the highest capacities of human nature. The latter is of course the less dangerous tendency in its extreme expression. Any kind of order is better than no order. More than that there is something comfortable in having one's position exactly defined for one and one's work marked out; and so far as this work is of a mechanical kind there is the possibility of acquiring great perfection in the performance of it. It may be only after

[1] *Manu*, viii. 413. [2] *Ib.*, viii. 22.

the lapse of centuries that such a society may wake up and realize that while it has stood still the world has marched on, and that it is not abreast of the conditions now existing in the wider world.

But we have still to consider another very important feature of social organization. In the later Law Books the course of the individual is further marked out for him in the definiteness that now belongs to the stages of human life which had been laid down in less definite form in the Upanishads. This is one point in which Manu and the later Law Books represent a more advanced development than the Upanishads and the Śūtras. These stages or *āśramas* are now definitely four, and much space is devoted to accounts of the duties belonging to each.

After initiation the boy goes to a *guru* from whom he receives instruction for a period which in different cases varies considerably.

> The vow (of studying) the three Vedas under a teacher must be kept for thirty-six years, or for half that time, or for a quarter, or until the (student) has perfectly learned them.[1]

During the period of this study the student lives with his teacher in a position of subordination to him, which has the greatest importance for the fixing of the boy's character. To this more strictly moral aspect of the education given in these schools we shall return presently.

When the young man has finished his course of studies with the *guru*, he becomes a *snātaka*, one who has bathed, and he is ready to enter the next *āśrama*, that of *gṛihastha* or householder. The duties of the householder are expounded in great detail. In the Upanishads, as we shall see, there seems to be reason for holding that the position of the householder was recognized by way of concession to actual fact, it being always made very clear that the life which he lived was of a lower kind, and of value only as a stage through which one might pass on his way to a higher condition of life. The

[1] *Manu*, iii. 1.

point of view of the Law Books is different. They offer directions for the conduct of life in the world in all its stages, and it is not strictly their business to discuss the relative values of the various stages. But at the same time we note a tendency to ascribe greater value to the life of the householder than in the case of the Upanishads. Sometimes it is boldly declared that the order of householders is the best.

> As all creatures subsist by receiving support from air, even so the members of all orders subsist by receiving support from the householder.
>
> Because men of the three other orders are daily supported by the householder with gifts of sacred knowledge and food, therefore the order of the householder is the most excellent order.[1]

So also:

> The householder offers sacrifices, the householder practises austerities, the householder distributes gifts; therefore is the order of householders the first of all.[2]

In the light of such statements it might seem that the value of the other two *āśramas* has become seriously impaired. But we make a great mistake if we look for consistency of thought in these ancient Indian writings. In the Law Books the subject is the conduct of life in all the variety of conditions under which life is lived. The student in his preparation for life, and the householder in his actual performance of the duties of life demanded most attention. But the hermit and the ascetic had also been given a place in the Indian scheme of things, a place determined very largely by a philosophy which relegates the worldly life to a position of comparative worthlessness. Yet these orders were there, and the exponents of *dharma* legislated for them as for the other orders. They seem to have departed very largely from the idea that the last of the four orders has any exclusive value as a means to the attainment of deliverance. The idea is rather that deliverance

[1] *Manu*, iii. 78. [2] *Institutes of Vishṇu*, lix. 28.

is the outcome of the observance of all the duties belonging to the four orders.

> If he lives in all these four according to the rules of the law, without allowing himself to be disturbed by anything, he will obtain salvation.[1]

On the other hand there are still evidences of belief in the greater value of the ascetic life as a means to the attainment of deliverance. It is laid down, for example, that, immediately on the completion of his studies, a man may become a *sannyāsī*, without having passed through the stages of the *gṛihastha* and the *vānaprastha*. Āpastamba says:

> Only after having fulfilled the duties of that (order of students) he shall go forth as an ascetic, remaining chaste.[2]

On the contrary, it is said in the *Mānava Dharma Śāstra*:

> When he has paid the three debts (i.e. to the sages, the manes, and the gods), let him apply his mind to the attainment of final liberation; he who seeks it without having paid his debts sinks downwards.
>
> Having studied the Vedas in accordance with the rule, having begotten sons according to the sacred law, and having offered sacrifices according to his ability, he may direct his mind to (the attainment of) final liberation.[3]

This contradiction reveals the confusion of mind that existed and that still exists in India regarding the value of the ordinary round of human life. But it seems to be clear that the tendency in the Law Books is to push the last two orders into a position of less importance. At the same time, they are two of the four orders, and their duties have to be defined, and at times language similar to that of the Upanishads is used regarding the value of the life lived in the fourth order.

We shall not here enter into the details of the life lived in the third and fourth orders, which is expounded with great fullness in the Law Books. It is of importance, however, that we should note the significance of the fact that the ascetic ideals which are embodied in the life of these orders have so

[1] *Āpastamba*, ii. 9. 21. 2. [2] *Ib.*, ii. 9. 21. 8.
[3] *Manu*, vi. 35-6.

important a place assigned to them. Whether or not the life of the householder is the best, the individual comes at least at the end of his life to a stage when he should forsake it for another form of life free from worldly ties.

We have thus seen in a general way how through the institution of caste, and, in a less marked way perhaps, through the institution of the *āśramas*, the course of the individual is defined for him. In all this the idea of authority is fundamental. The details of conduct are not organized by reference to any end in the pursuit of which the individual can exercise freedom. There is an end, the same end as we find to be given intellectual formulation in the Upanishads, but the individual does not by reference to it judge the value of forms of conduct or discover new duties. These are laid down for him once for all, and his business is unquestioningly to fulfil them. When the voice of authority is silent there is no other principle of guidance except the inclination of the individual. This comes out in various of the Law Books, and may be quoted in the words of the *Mānava Dharma Śāstra* in the form in which we now have it:

> The whole Veda is the (first) source of the sacred law, next the tradition and the virtuous conduct of those who know the (Veda further), also the customs of holy men, and (finally) self-satisfaction.[1]

We come now to the second part of the inquiry which we proposed, viz. the means by which this authority was maintained. This involves a discussion of the system of education described in the literature which we are now studying. The early Indian thinkers realized as clearly as Plato did the importance of education as an instrument for the moulding of the minds and characters of the guardians of the social order, though unlike Plato they busied themselves more with the practice than the theory. While we are concerned here with the ethical significance of this system of education, we must not imagine that it was only in this aspect of it that it was important. In the Upanishads we shall see how the intellectual

[1] *Manu*, ii. 6.

acumen of youths of ability was developed, and into what amazing flights of philosophical speculation they were fitted to soar. But criticism was not turned upon life or upon current morality as in the case of so much of the speculation of ancient Greece and modern Europe. It was turned upon life in the sense that the illusoriness of it was the constant theme of their thoughts, and it was turned on current morality in the sense that it was held that it had no longer any validity for him who had attained the goal. But it was not questioned whether the current morality was valid for those who live in the world. For them the Vedas as expounded in the words and lives of holy men was all the guide they needed.

Looking then at the ethical significance of this system of education, we cannot fail to be impressed with the wonderful way in which it was fitted to maintain the existing order. This is seen above all in the place that was given to the Guru. No teachers were ever invested with such authority or regarded with such reverence. The Guru is to be venerated above all other men.

> Of him who gives natural birth and him who gives the knowledge of the Veda, the giver of the Veda is the more venerable father; for the birth for the sake of the Veda ensures eternal rewards both in this life and after death.[1]

In all his behaviour in the presence of the Guru the pupil is to show to him the greatest deference. He is to come near to his teacher with the same reverence as to a deity, and many instructions are given as to the manner in which he is to bear himself in his presence. He must not speak to him first, and in addressing him he must always use some designation of honour. He must not sit when the Guru is standing; he must not sit in such a position that the wind blows from him towards the Guru; even when the Guru is not looking towards him, he must keep his face turned towards the Guru. He must in all things be obedient to the Guru. He must never sleep when the Guru is awake, and his first duty in the morning

[1] *Manu*, ii. 146.

after he has performed his devotions is to go to the Guru and embrace his feet. . . . These are but some of the many injunctions laid upon the student touching his relation to his teacher. To the Guru's wife an honour and deference also very profound are to be shown. In other ways also he is subjected to rigid discipline. Chastity and abstention from various kinds of food are imposed upon him. So also he must avoid various kinds of amusement. He must not injure any living creature, he must be truthful, and he must refrain from strife. He must sleep on the ground and he must beg his food, eating only what the Guru leaves for him of what he collects. The youth was thus subjected to a discipline extending over many years, the importance of which as a means of rendering him amenable to authority it is impossible to exaggerate. We are all familiar with the principle involved in this kind of education. The idea is the same as that which is expressed in the education which is still given as a preparation for service in some religious orders, and we know how through such a system of education the mind and character of a youth can be moulded. But it is a training not in self-reliance and independence of judgement, but in subservience to authority and reverence for what is established just because it is established.

Plato says in the *Republic* that recourse must be had to fables in the training of the youth of his ideal state in order that they may be brought to realize that the social class in which they find themselves was not arbitrarily chosen for them but was theirs before birth. It is interesting to observe how what Plato recommends in theory was followed by the Indians in practice. 'Citizens,' says Plato, 'we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honour; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron.'[1]

[1] *Republic*, Sect. 415, Jowett's Translation.

He little knew that in a distant part of the world a similar tale was actually being taught and was being believed. The account of the origin of the four caste-divisions given in the last book of the *Ṛig Veda* is repeated in the *Mānava Dharma Śāstra* and in many other places.

> For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he caused the Brāhmaṇa, the Kshatriya, the Vaiśya, and the Śūdra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet.[1]

The fixity of caste distinctions does not, however, depend solely on the acceptance of such a fable. In the Law Books the belief is held with the greatest firmness that the order into which one is born is determined by one's conduct in former states of existence. The fable served only to explain a system now deeply rooted in the social habits of the people and in their ways of thought, and through the discipline to which the youth was subjected by his Guru, more than through any other single means, the habit of submission to the established order of things was developed and maintained.

We have already said that the term *dharma* covers not only ethical conduct but the whole conglomeration of forms of conduct that were settled or established. As a rule ethical injunctions are interwoven almost inextricably with others that have no ethical value. Let us look at some of the ways in which this is seen. We may draw attention in the first place to the way in which moral distinctions are distorted by considerations connected with caste. Apart altogether from his moral character the Brāhman is put on a pedestal, while the low caste man on the other hand is despised.

> A Brāhman, be he ignorant or learned, is a great divinity.[2]

The very name of the Śūdra, on the other hand, must indicate contempt. Again, the value attached to knowledge of the Vedas as bringing merit to the Brāhman serves to emphasize the unethical position which is assigned to him. The study of the Vedas is said to destroy guilt[3]; it leads to greatness and

[1] *Manu*, i. 31. [2] *Ib.* ix. 317. [3] *Ib.* xi. 247.

fame[1]; and the neglect of such study is followed by many evil consequences. Again, if we turn to some of the great numbers of actions that are forbidden, we shall find that the lists of such forbidden actions contain some that have no moral value mixed indiscriminately with others which are truly ethical. The ground for the prohibition in many cases is simply a magical one. It must be admitted that it is difficult to draw lines of distinction. We are all agreed that truth-speaking, for example, is an ethical duty. Most are agreed that honour to parents is also an ethical duty, though there might be considerable difference of opinion as to the ways in which such honour should express itself. Do we pass into another sphere when we are told that a younger brother must not marry before an elder brother? It is hard to say. Every statement of moral duty implies at least presuppositions of a metaphysical or theological kind, and the barely ethical is something that does not exist. In such a case the student of morals has to proceed beyond the ethical to the foundations on which the ethical rests. Yet it does seem that whatever difficulties may arise out of the implication of ethical with metaphysical ideas, we are in a different sphere when the problem arises of disentangling ethical from magical conceptions. Take, for example, the strange catalogue which Manu gives us of people who are to be avoided.[2] It includes not only drunkards, adulterers, gamblers, and hypocrites, but also persons with black teeth, lepers, epileptics, and consumptives, makers of bows and arrows, and trainers of sporting dogs. We have jumbled together here prohibitions some of which have an ethical motive, others a hygienic, and others the only motive for which must be simply magical. The ethical becomes hopelessly distorted when it is so confused with the delusions of magic.

All this may be made somewhat clearer if we return to a subject which has already been referred to in the section dealing with the *Atharva Veda*. It was there said that sin

[1] *Manu*, iii. 66. [2] *Ib.* iii. 150–66.

tended to be regarded as a quasi-physical substance, and, generally speaking, the same statement would hold true regarding the conception of sin in the Law Books. The words that have been translated sin are very numerous and they represent various shades of meaning. Jolly[1] asserts that there is no part of the Brahmanical code of laws, the roots of which reach so far into the highest antiquity as the teaching regarding sins and the penances for them. In any case there still persists the same quasi-physical conception of sin which we noted in the *Atharva Veda*. This is seen notably in the penances which are prescribed, especially in the bathing and sipping of water and other physical exercises that are prescribed as means to cleansing.

In the late *Institutes of Vishṇu*[2] there is an interesting classification of sins, the main principles of which no doubt come down from much earlier times. They are divided into nine classes:

1. Deadly sins—*atipātaka*. These are certain forms of incest, to be atoned for only by burning.

2. Great sins—*mahāpātaka*. These are killing a Brāhman, drinking spirituous liquor, stealing the gold of a Brāhman, connexion with a Guru's wife; also social intercourse with those guilty of such sins.

3. Minor sins of a similar character—*anupātaka*. These include the killing of certain other classes of persons, giving false evidence and killing a friend, stealing lands or deposits of a Brāhman, certain forms of incest and adultery.

4. Minor sins—*upapātaka*. Sins of false statement, neglect of certain religious duties, adultery, unlawful occupation, offences connected with marrying before an elder brother, &c., not paying one's debts to the gods, ṛishis, and manes, atheism, &c.

5. Sins effecting loss of caste—*jātibraṁśakara*. Causing bodily pain to a Brāhman, smelling things which should not be smelt, dishonest dealing, certain unnatural crimes.

[1] *Recht und Sitte*, p. 116.

[2] *Institutes of Vishṇu*, xxxiii–xlii.

6. Sins which degrade to a mixed caste—*saṁkarīkaraṇa*. Killing domestic or wild animals.

7. Sins which render one unworthy to receive alms—, *apātrīkaraṇa*. Receiving presents and alms from despicable persons, trade, money-lending, lying, serving a Śūdra.

8. Sins causing defilement—*malāvaha*. Killing birds, amphibious animals, and aquatic animals, worms and insects; eating nutmegs or other plants similar in their effects to intoxicating liquors.

9. Miscellaneous sins—*prakīrṇaka*. Those not already mentioned.

This list is by no means exhaustive, nor indeed is it pretended that it is so. In the same work[1] there is another long list of offences, including manslaughter, the killing of various kinds of animals, the destruction of certain plants, stealing, &c. But enough has perhaps been said to enable us to realize the general character of the kinds of actions that are regarded as sinful.

Many cases are mentioned in which the guilt of sin is transferred from one person to another. This is so particularly in the case where a king judges unjustly. It is said that where justice, wounded by injustice, approaches and the judges do not extract the dart, they too are wounded by the same dart.[2] And we have extreme examples of the way in which the contagion of guilt is passed on in such a passage as the following:

> The killer of a learned Brāhman throws his guilt on him who eats his food, an adulterous wife on her (negligent) husband, a (sinning) pupil or sacrificer on (their negligent) teacher (or priest), a thief on the king (who pardons him).[3]

Many more passages might be quoted illustrating the same principle. Sin is not a disease of the soul or an evil state of the soul. It is something that is as separable from the individual as the coat he wears. It seems to be implied that

[1] *Institutes of Vishṇu*, l. ff. [2] *Manu*, viii. 12. [3] *Manu*, viii. 317.

it is indestructible and that release from it is to be attained through the passing of it on to another. The same is true of merit which one acquires. Even he who becomes free from the bonds of *karma* does so not through the annihilation of his *karma* but through escape from it.

> Making over (the merit of his own) good actions to his friends and (the guilt of) his evil deeds to his enemies, he attains the eternal Brahman by the practice of meditation.[1]

These conceptions are crude but they have been very persistent in the Hindu conception of sin.

We must always bear in mind that in general in classical Hindu literature wrong-doing is regarded from a point of view very different from that of the modern European. In the point of view of the average European there is doubtless often confusion enough, but there is reference to some kind of a standard more or less clearly apprehended, with the result that there is some kind of consistency in the various moral judgements which he passes. In the case of the Hindu, as we have seen, the ordinary duties of life are discovered by reference to authority. If we press the matter further and seek to find a basis for this authority, we find that prominent in the minds of the law-givers at any rate is the thought of sin as what causes one to fall from caste. This is the root idea in the term *pātaka*. Now this is only one of the very numerous words that are used to designate offences against *dharma*, but perhaps most of these words express ideas which stand in fairly close relation to this. The ideas contained most commonly in them are those of going astray and of impurity—departure from the way of *dharma*, and being defiled. And defilement again is conceived quasi-physically. It is not the spiritual defilement which one incurs in the harbouring of evil thoughts and purposes, but something that may be incurred through means purely physical, which, when incurred, by its contagion may be a source of impurity to others, and which

[1] *Manu*, vi. 79.

may be removed in many cases by purely physical processes. In these facts in themselves there is nothing remarkable, for a study of the origins of morality shows that the moral has been gradually differentiated from a mass of conceptions chiefly connected with ceremonial. The remarkable thing is that in India, at a time when the capacity for speculation had reached such a high stage of development, teaching so crude should have been regarded as authoritative.

Closely connected with all this is the fact that the offences enumerated are all overt acts. Judgement is passed not on the inner but on the outer side of the act. No doubt a distinction is sometimes drawn in point of gravity between an offence committed intentionally and one committed unintentionally, but the unintentional offence has to be expiated equally with the intentional one, the penalty being only less severe.

But this teaching regarding offences that cause one to fall is far from furnishing us with the complete content of the ethical teaching of the Law Books. There are many other actions prohibited or enjoined, which it is important for us to consider. First we may look at certain duties, some of which have been touched on in previous chapters, connected with primitive ethical conceptions.

No duty is inculcated more frequently than that of hospitality. With hospitality to one's fellow-men there is still coupled that which is due to supra-terrestrial beings—'to Brāhmans, the Manes, the gods, and the Bhūtas'. According to Manu, 'He who does not feed these five—the gods, his guests, those whom he is bound to maintain, the Manes, and himself, lives not, though he breathes'. On the other hand, the hospitable reception of guests procures wealth, fame, long life, and heavenly bliss. By honouring guests, according to the *Institutes of Vishṇu*,[1] he obtains the highest reward. The ways in which the duty of hospitality are to be fulfilled are laid down with considerable detail. A Brāhman who stays for one night only is to be called a guest (*atithi*), certain

[1] *Institutes of Vishṇu*, lxvii. 28 ff.

restrictions being laid down to prevent the abuse of hospitality. Members of other castes, even Śūdras, are to be entertained, but they have not the position of guests (*atithi*). The guest is to be honoured by sharing in the best of the food provided, and by receiving a seat, a room, and other accommodation in accordance with his standing. There are certain classes of people who are not to be received, viz. 'Heretics, men who follow forbidden occupations, men who live like cats, rogues, logicians (arguing against the Veda), and those who live like herons'.[1] We have already drawn attention to the fact that the duty of hospitality has been recognized in primitive ethical thought and practice generally. Westermarck[2] gives many illustrations from the customs of very diverse peoples which go to show how widespread is the recognition of this duty. In primitive culture those forms of conduct in which are expressed the principle of tribal exclusiveness give place to the duty of entertaining strangers. He raises the question as to the ground for such an attitude to strangers, and suggests two possible explanations. (1) It may be that even among savages the altruistic feelings, however narrow, can be stirred by the sight of a suffering and harmless stranger, or (2) the host himself may expect to reap benefit from the act of showing hospitality. He holds that the rules of hospitality are in the main based on egoistic considerations. There seems to be little doubt that in the minds of primitive peoples there is fear of the occult powers that may belong to the stranger. His influence is potent for good or evil.

A guest comes to the house resembling a burning fire.[3]

This means, according to Bühler, that if offended he might burn the house with the flames of his anger. The blessings to which we have referred above, which are supposed to come from the exercise of hospitality, are selfish blessings—wealth, fame, life and the like. We must not, however, rule out the possibility of the presence of altruistic motives. The fact of the association

[1] *Manu*, iv. 30. [2] *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, i. 581.
[3] *Āpastamba*, ii. 3. 6. 3. Cf. *Kaṭha Up.*, i. 7.

of the duty of hospitality to living men with the duties that must be performed to the departed would point to the presence of such motives. For the offerings made to the spirits of the departed were not the outcome simply of fear of the consequences which neglect would involve to him from whom the offerings were due, but at least as much of an unselfish desire for the welfare of the departed. And, even if the duty of hospitality to one's fellow-men were at first dictated by motives largely selfish, the habitual fulfilment of the duty would lead increasingly to the development of the spirit of disinterested kindness. Many a duty that is performed at the beginning with a view to the attainment of selfish ends comes in time to be performed because it is good in itself or because it brings good to others.

The duty of liberality does not occupy so large a place as in some of the other writings which we have studied, but high importance is still attached to it. The objects of this virtue are specially the twice-born. It is noteworthy here again that the giving of gifts is enjoined not primarily with a view to the good of him to whom they are given, but with a view to the good of the giver. The merit accruing from the gift is in accordance not with the need of the recipient, but with his position. Sometimes the reward comes to the giver along the lines of his gift, as the following passage shows:

> A giver of water obtains the satisfaction (of his hunger and thirst), a giver of food imperishable happiness, a giver of sesamum desirable offspring, a giver of a lamp most excellent eyesight, &c.[1]

Sometimes the reward is represented in a more general way, but what is essential is the thought that the giver of gifts by his liberality acquires merit to himself. Accordingly gifts are frequently mentioned as freeing from sin. For example:

> The digger of a well has the consequences of the half of his evil acts taken from him as soon as the water comes forth from it.[2]
>
> By confession, by repentance, by austerity, and by reciting (the Veda)

[1] *Manu*, iv. 229.

[2] *Institutes of Vishṇu*, xci. 1.

a sinner is freed from guilt, and in case no other course is possible, by liberality.[1]

Niggardliness, on the other hand, is a heinous sin.

He who cooks for himself only, eats nothing but sin; for that alone is considered as fit food for the virtuous which is left after the (customary) oblations have been offered.[2]

Here we have a connecting link between the virtue of liberality and the kindred virtue of hospitality.

As has been said, the objects of meritorious liberality are specially the twice-born, and in all cases it is important that gifts should be given only to worthy persons, while it is equally important that only worthy persons should receive them. Otherwise they lose their efficacy; indeed they become positively harmful. And the danger is greater to the receiver than to the giver. In a sense different from the New Testament application of the saying, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'.

As a husbandman reaps no harvest when he has sown the seed in barren soil, even so the giver of sacrificial food gains no reward if he presented it to a man unacquainted with the Ṛiks.

(If no learned Brāhmaṇa be at hand), he may rather honour a (virtuous) friend than an enemy, though the latter may be qualified (by learning and so forth); for sacrificial food eaten by a foe bears no reward after death.[3]

The dangers involved in the receiving of gifts is the subject of the following quotation:

Though (by his learning and sanctity) he may be entitled to accept presents, let him not attach himself (too much) to this (habit); for through his accepting (many) presents the divine light in him is soon extinguished.

Hence an ignorant (man) should be afraid of accepting any presents; for by reason of a very small (gift) even a fool sinks (into hell) as a cow into a morass.[4]

These quotations will serve to bring out some of the main ideas gathering round the virtue of liberality as it is inculcated

[1] *Manu*, xi. 228.
[2] *Institutes of Vishṇu*, lxvii. 43.
[3] *Manu*, iii. 142, 144.
[4] *Ib.* iv. 186, 191.

in the Law Books. The passages which deal with the giving of food to others express ideas in line with those found in connexion with many religions regarding the necessity of sharing all one's blessings with the gods. The same sacrificial idea lies at the root of the practice of giving to others; for the god does not consume the material part of the sacrifice, but only the spiritual part, and so food shared with others may fulfil the sacrificial idea. But this touches only one aspect of the giving of gifts. Gifts are of many kinds, and in the *Institutes of Vishṇu* we are given a list of propitious gifts. Underlying the whole mass of belief regarding the efficacy of gifts there is undoubtedly the ancient magical conception that through a gift offered to a being endowed with supernatural power one may become a sharer in that power or in the benefits of it. This is the meaning of the offering of gifts to Brāhmans learned in the Vedas, for their position and learning put them in possession of marvellous powers. Similarly ascetics are credited with supernatural powers, and to them too gifts are offered. But as we have seen it is not the giver alone who is affected by the gift. There are gifts which carry with them good or ill to the receiver. The gift of an evil or low-caste man, for example, may bring injury to the receiver. We thus see how deeply the virtue of liberality in the form in which we find it here is penetrated by ideas of magical origin. But let us once more add the caution that we are not therefore bound to assume that more truly ethical and unselfish ideas played no part in the development of habits of generosity among the people.

The duty of *ahiṁsā* is given a conspicuous place in the Law Books. From the time of Mahāvīra and Gautama this idea has had a place in Indian ethical thought and practice that is almost unique. The content of the idea varies somewhat in different quarters and at different times, but throughout the history of Hinduism the general principle of refraining from injuring living creatures has been adhered to. Let us look at the form which the idea takes here. The killing of various

animals is forbidden. In particular the killing of cows is forbidden, but many other animals are mentioned along with it. We are told that to slay a donkey, a horse, a camel, a deer, an elephant, a goat, a sheep, a fish, a snake, or a buffalo, degrades one to a mixed caste. To kill insects, large or small, or birds, makes one impure. The eating of flesh is forbidden, and more than one ground is given for this prohibition. He who injures innoxious beings from a wish to give himself pleasure never finds happiness either living or dead. He who does not seek to cause the sufferings of bonds and death to living creatures, but seeks the good of all living beings, obtains endless bliss; he who does not injure any creature attains without an effort what he thinks of, what he undertakes, and what he fixes his mind on. Once more, according to Manu:

> There is no greater sinner than that man who, though not worshipping the gods or the manes, seeks to increase the bulk of his own flesh by the flesh of other beings.[1]

But the strictness of the principle is qualified in various ways. No animal is to be destroyed without lawful reason, and a lawful reason is provided by the purposes of sacrifice. Again, there are many qualifications to the laws forbidding the eating of flesh. Let us quote only one or two of them:

> One may eat meat when it has been sprinkled with water, while Mantras were recited, when Brāhmaṇas desire (one's doing it), when one is engaged (in the performance of a rite) according to the law, and when one's life is in danger.[2]

Again:

> He who eats meat, when he honours the gods and manes, commits no sin, whether he has bought it, or himself has killed (the animal), or has received it as a present from others.[3]

Again, the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* does not apply to the taking of the lives of enemies in battle, or to the infliction of capital

[1] *Manu*, v. 52. [2] *Ib.* v. 27. [3] *Ib.* v. 32.

punishment on a criminal. By qualifications such as these the force of the doctrine is very considerably weakened. The exceptions to the general principles that life should not be taken, and that the flesh of animals should not be eaten, were so many and of such diverse kinds, that we can believe it would often be exceedingly difficult to determine whether a particular act was a breach of the law or not. We know that hunting and the eating of flesh continued in spite of all laws.

It will help us to understand the curious ramifications of this doctrine if we turn our attention to the psychological root from which it sprang, and try to follow the main lines of its growth. The real principle underlying it has frequently been misunderstood, as when unscientific writers have suggested that it has a close connexion with transmigration, the Hindu fearing that in eating flesh he may be eating the bodies of his own kind. For a true explanation we have to go back to the mind of the primitive man, and to the awe with which he regards life in all its forms. It is only a step from this to the belief which we find at an early stage in Indian thought that the injuring of life is a hindrance to the attainment of the highest religious life. It was among the Vānaprasthas that this belief first took definite practical shape. Each group of Vānaprasthas had its own rules on this subject, but they were the expression in different ways of the primitive belief that it was wrong to injure either plant or animal life. The sin lay not in eating flesh, but in destroying life. It is important to bear this in mind, for in modern times attention has been directed by many writers to what is a secondary and later development of the doctrine as if it were its essential feature.

With the development of the philosophy of the *Ātman* and of the practice of renunciation of the world with a view to the attainment of release, the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* became more firmly established. It became the first rule of life of those who so renounced the world. There was still no distinction drawn between plant and animal life, and strict obedience to

the rule was possible because these men begged their food. It may strike us as a very casuistical way of observing the rule, which made its observance dependent on its non-observance by others, but it has to be remembered that at this stage it was a rule which did not hold for the householder. It was only gradually that it came to be extended to householders, and it is clear that when it was so extended it could not be followed by them in the same complete way. It could not for obvious reasons be applied to plant life. We can well understand how in general its application to animal life would be considered more important, and how attention would tend to be diverted from its other aspect. We have early evidence of the development of the idea on these lines in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where we find vegetarian offerings taking the place of the animal sacrifices which had been offered in the Vaishṇava temples.

In the Law Books, though much is made of the duty of abstaining from animal food, and from it alone, the chief motive is perfectly clear. We have it in the following passage in Manu :

> Meat can never be obtained without injury to living creatures, and injury to sentient beings is detrimental to the attainment of heavenly bliss; let him therefore shun the use of meat.
>
> Having well considered the disgusting origin of flesh and the cruelty of fettering and slaying corporeal beings, let him entirely abstain from eating flesh.[1]

We have treated at some length three virtues which have a special interest because of their origin. These must not, however, be allowed to overshadow the more commonplace everyday virtues, the observance of which is almost a condition of the maintenance of the social organism. The duty of truthfulness is continually enjoined ; honesty is inculcated, and theft in many forms is condemned ; the purity of family life is guarded, and in certain cases of its violation, penalties, some of them very terrible, are prescribed. Various forms of

[1] *Manu*, v. 48, 49.

dissipation are condemned, notably indulgence in spirituous liquors, gambling, and other forms of vice.

In all that has been said up to this point there has been little indication that there has been represented in the Law Books anything but a very external view of life and conduct. Social life, so far as we have treated it, seems to have been regarded almost exclusively from without. The emphasis has been on overt acts and not on the motives from which they have sprung. Sin has been feared as an evil substance that clings to one, bringing defilement, and its removal may be effected through physical means. But it is right that we should give attention to some signs of a deeper and more spiritual view of morality which are to be found here and there. In spite of the confusion which generally prevails of the non-ethical with the ethical aspects of *dharma*, there are a few passages which stand out markedly as revealing the fact that even where the human mind is most steeped in ritualism there may be present a truly ethical sense which will sometimes express itself. Gauṭama, for example, deals much in the orthodox way with the *saṁskāras* or sacraments, but that he recognizes that the inner ethical virtues of the soul stand on a different and higher plane is manifest from the following passage:

> Now follow the eight good qualities of the soul,
>
> Compassion on all creatures, forbearance, freedom from anger, purity, quietism, auspiciousness, freedom from avarice, and freedom from covetousness.
>
> He who is sanctified by these forty sacraments, but whose soul is destitute of the eight good qualities, will not be united with Brahman, nor does he reach his heaven.
>
> But he, forsooth, who is sanctified by a few only of these forty sacraments, and whose soul is endowed with the eight excellent qualities, will be united with Brahman, and will dwell in his heaven.[1]

A similar ethical sense is to be seen in Āpastamba[2] in the account which he gives of the faults 'which tend to destroy

[1] *Gautama*, viii. 22.

[2] *Āpastamba*, i. 8. 23. 5.

the creatures'. These are chiefly faults not of external behaviour but of inner spiritual disposition. They are:

> Anger, exultation, grumbling, covetousness, perplexity, doing injury, hypocrisy, lying, gluttony, calumny, envy, lust, secret hatred, neglect to keep the senses in subjection, neglect to concentrate the mind.

There is also a passage of very great interest in Manu, where the watchfulness and just judgement of conscience are emphasized. The statement is part of the exhortation which the judge addresses to witnesses in court before they give their evidence, and in its main outlines is no doubt very ancient. But it is significant that it should have a place in the Law Books.

> The wicked indeed say in their hearts, 'Nobody sees us'; but the gods distinctly see them and the male within their own breasts.
>
> . . . .
>
> If thou thinkest, O friend of virtue, with respect to thyself, 'I am alone', (know that) that sage who witnesses all virtuous acts and all crimes, ever resides in thy heart.
>
> If thou art not at variance with that divine Yama, the son of Vivasvat, who dwells in thy heart, thou needest neither visit the Ganges nor the (land of the) Kurus.[1]

The significance of such expressions will become clearer if we reflect on the nature of the literature which we are now studying. It is as has been already said not properly concerned with morality, but with many aspects of human conduct and relationships. From the very nature of the case it is to a large extent the externals of conduct that are treated. There is nothing surprising about this, but we do feel surprised that at a time when philosophical thought was so far advanced conduct and character should be regarded on the whole in so crude a way. The occasional appearance of passages like those to which we have referred proves the existence of an under-current of thought of a purer kind, which saw conduct in the light of the ideal towards which the minds of thoughtful Hindus have been directed

[1] *Manu*, viii. 85, 91, 92.

since the days when the Upanishads were composed. The highest virtues then are such as self-control, calm of mind, abstinence from sensual indulgence, and such other qualities as mark the freedom of the mind from the fetters of desire and of sense. And the greatest sins are such as anger, hatred, lust, and the like. It is not only in the few passages to which reference has just been made or in others of the same character that these virtues and vices are recognized. They have their place and influence throughout the Law Books; but that place and influence are comparatively small. The atmosphere of the Law Books is charged with ideas of a lower kind. We shall have occasion to make some remarks at a later stage regarding the underlying conceptions of Hindu ethical thought at its highest. But for the present it will suffice to say that, speaking generally, we do not have Hindu thought at its highest but at a level at which it shows the deep influence of forces which have marked ethical thought everywhere at an early stage in its development.

BOOK II. ETHICS OF THE PHILOSOPHIES AND THEOLOGIES

CHAPTER I

THE ETHICS OF THE UPANISHADS

It has been said of the Hindu mind that it is like that of Newman, 'subtle when it analyses, simple when it believes', penetrating fearlessly and with relentless logic into the most profound problems of existence, yet in practical religion extraordinarily credulous. We have seen the Hindu mind in its believing mood, believing in the supreme importance of the most trivial steps in unintelligible ritual forms. In the Upanishads we see it in its speculative mood. The two moods are never absolutely independent of each other; one seldom occupies the mind to the complete exclusion of the other; for we find even in the Brāhmaṇas occasional flashes of philosophical thought, while intermingled with the philosophy of the Upanishads we find mythology, superstition, and ritual teaching. Yet there are these two moods or tendencies characteristic of the Hindu mind, and as the later Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas are the great early texts for the study of the one, so the Upanishads are the great texts for the study of the other.

The problem of the Upanishads is not primarily that of human conduct; it is the widest and most fundamental philosophical problem—that of the nature and meaning of reality. The ethical problem in a certain sense arises only incidentally, but it does arise, and nowhere in Hindu literature, with the possible exception of the *Bhagavadgītā*, have we

more important data for its study. Further, the philosophical speculation of the Upanishads has an essentially religious bearing. It was not from sheer delight in intellectual exercise that these thinkers undertook to explore the hidden depths of reality. The Indian mind has no doubt at all times delighted in speculation for its own sake, but the great impulse to it came from practical needs, chiefly perhaps from a sense of the finitude and unsatisfyingness of the phenomenal world and of the failure of a ritual religion to satisfy the demands of the intellect and the heart. Just as in his thinking about the nature of reality Spinoza was actuated by the desire to discover something which would give him 'a joy continuous and supreme to eternity', so the writers of the Upanishads were actuated by the desire to find a means of deliverance from the evils of life. With them it was not as with Spinoza and many other thinkers an ethical quest, but it was a practical one. There was the same desire for release from the meshes of the lower and for escape to the highest; and the quest had the same religious character. Nor does this fact in any way invalidate the inquiry. The tendency in some modern text-books of ethics is to regard ethical experience as something that can be studied by itself without reference to the wider implications of human existence. Some psychological analysis is deemed sufficient as a basis for the whole ethical structure, and the relation of ethics to religion on the one hand and to metaphysics on the other hand is dealt with summarily in concluding chapters, as if the problems of the reality and nature of the human soul, its immortality, and its relation to God were not in the highest degree determinative of the lines which human conduct should follow. Whatever else one may have to say of the ethical thinking contained in the Upanishads, this at least must be admitted at the outset that it is conducted in full view of the wider implications of human existence.

I

We may plunge boldly into the heart of our subject and begin with the statement that the conceptions of *karma* and *saṁsāra* are of fundamental importance for the ethical thought of the Upanishads. We found in early writings foreshadowings of the former conception, and in a less marked way of the latter. In the Upanishads they find a place among the conceptions by means of which it is sought to make experience intelligible. Up to the time when the Brāhmaṇas were written it was believed that life continued after the death of the body, not in this world but in worlds that may be designated heaven and hell. Such a belief involved belief in the existence of a soul separable from the body. Only in a vague and tentative way was the suggestion made that the soul might become re-incarnate in this world, though the idea had emerged of successive births and deaths in another world. We do not know through what process the belief was developed that the souls of men and animals and even plants might become embodied in any of the infinite variety of forms that life takes on earth, but in the Upanishads, though not definitely in all of them, such teaching is laid down, not tentatively or controversially but dogmatically. This belief did not drive out the earlier belief in the possibility of rebirth in another world, which persisted alongside of it. Further, it is laid down in the Upanishads that each successive birth is determined by works done in previous lives.

> According to his deeds and according to his knowledge he is born again here as a worm, or as an insect, or as a fish, or as a bird, or as a lion, or as a boar, or as a serpent, or as a tiger, or as a man, or as something else in different places.[1]
>
> Those whose conduct has been good, will quickly attain some good birth, the birth of a Brāhman, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaiśya. But those whose conduct has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, or a hog, or a *Chaṇḍāla*.[2]

The doctrine of work and transmigration in their relation

[1] *Kaush. Up.* i. 2.

[2] *Chhānd. U.* v. 10. 7.

to each other has thus been set forth in its simplest form. The process is far more complex than these quotations taken apart from their context might lead us to imagine. The latter passage concludes a section in which we are told that the path of transmigration is entered upon by those who live in a village practising sacrifices, works of public utility, and alms.

> They go to the smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the dark half of the moon, from the dark half of the moon to the six months when the sun goes to the south. But they do not reach the year.
>
> From the months they go to the world of the fathers, from the world of the fathers to the ether, from the ether to the moon. That is Soma, the king. Here they are loved (eaten) by the Devas, yes, the Devas love (eat) them.
>
> Having dwelt there till their (good) works are consumed, they return again that way as they came, to the ether, from the ether to the air. Then the sacrificer, having become air, becomes smoke, having become smoke, he becomes mist.
>
> Having become mist, he becomes a cloud, having become a cloud, he rains down. Then he is born as rice and corn, herbs and trees, sesamum and beans. From thence the escape is beset with most difficulties. For whoever the persons may be that eat the food, and beget offspring, he henceforth becomes like unto them.[1]

Then follows the passage last-quoted. This, with the parallel passage, *Bṛihadāraṇyaka U.* vi, 2, is the most important statement of the doctrine of *karma* and *saṁsāra* in the Upanishads.

The interpretation of this passage in all its details is by no means easy. The 'path' that is described is known as the 'path of the fathers', as distinct from the 'path of the Devas'. The fathers figure in all the Vedic writings from the *Ṛig Veda* downwards. They were human beings, 'seers who made the paths by which the recent dead go to join them', dwelling now in the third heaven. They feast with the gods, and along with them share in the sacrificial offerings of men. Worship and prayer are offered to them, it being in their power to bestow such blessings as the gods themselves bestow. They are believed to be endowed with immortality, and in a variety

[1] *Chhānd.* v. 10. 3-6.

of ways functions belonging to the gods are attributed to them. In this we have nothing but a description in exaggerated terms of the glory of the blessed dead in heaven. In the time of the Brāhmaṇas a distinction came to be drawn between heaven and the place of the fathers, the door of the one being in the North-East and that of the other in the South-East. In the passage before us certain kinds of deeds are said to lead by way of the world of the fathers, and this way is contrasted with the path of the Devas, which leads to the conditioned Brahman, a path which is entered through knowledge and through the practice of faith and austerities. The truth is that here we have an older conception of retribution crossing the conception of retribution as meted out in a new life lived in this world. They are conceptions that are inconsistent with each other, and yet in a curious way they are here bound together.

It is not necessary to study the passage in all its details. We may ignore the purely mythological elements in it, only remarking that the *Pitṛiyāna*, or way of the fathers, is involved in darkness, as contrasted with the *Devayāna*, or path of the gods, with which the preceding section deals, which is in light. The point of greatest interest for us lies in the fact that in the account of the way of the fathers a double conception of retribution seems to be involved. It is said that certain persons dwell with the Devas till their works are consumed. At the same time it is the works that they have done that determine the character of their new life on earth. Max Müller, following later Vedantic interpreters of the Upanishads, says that 'besides the good sacrificial works, the fruits of which are consumed in the moon, there are other works which have to be enjoyed or expiated, as the case may be, in a new existence'.[1] But it is difficult to find any satisfactory ground for this distinction among kinds of works in the context. It is more likely that we have here the combination of two entirely distinct conceptions of

[1] Note to *Chhānd. U.* v. 10. 8.

retribution. There is the conception of retribution as attained in another sphere of existence, crossed by the conception of retribution in another life on earth. There are further complications still, which for the present we may pass over, as they concern the student of religion rather than the student of ethics. Attention is drawn to this particular complication because it is interesting to see the doctrine of *karma* and transmigration in this, one of its earlier definite formulations, interwoven with older beliefs.

What is of importance for us here is not the process whereby transmigration takes place, but the fact that it is now definitely believed to take place—that it is believed, in the case of any given individual, that the actions that he performs in this life will determine the form of another birth on earth that he must inevitably undergo. It is impossible to quote largely from passages where the doctrine is expounded. The Self is likened to a caterpillar, which, when it has reached the end of a leaf, draws itself together towards another leaf.[1] So, it is said, the Self, having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, approaches another body and draws itself together towards it. The assumption is that there is an immortal part in the Self. The constitution of this immortal part is dealt with in one important passage:

> A person consists of desires. And as is his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap.
>
> And here there is this verse: 'To whatever object a man's own mind is attached, to that he goes strenuously together with his deed; and having obtained the end of whatever deed he does here on earth, he returns again from that world to the world of action.'[2]

Whatever a man desires to that he becomes attached, towards that he goes. There is a saying that what one desires in youth one will have to satiety in old age. The thinkers whose speculations are recorded in the Upanishads have put this idea in far more sharp and definite form.

[1] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 3. [2] *Ib.* iv. 4. 5. 6.

For example:

> He who desires the world of the fathers, by his mere will the fathers come to receive him, and having obtained the world of the fathers he is happy, &c. . . . Whatever object he is attached to, whatever object he desires, by his mere will it comes to him, and having obtained it he is happy.[1]

From all this it is clear that the root of the self that manifests itself in the various forms that an individual being takes in successive births is desire. Also it will be observed that this self is not regarded as in any way involving the existence of a not-self. It is not in opposition to a stubborn material which it can shape or modify only within limits in accordance with its own purposes. As we shall see later the not-self has no independent being; indeed in a real sense it does not exist. In desiring, the self is shaping its own destiny absolutely. There is an interesting passage in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, where it is said that at death, speech, eye, mind, hearing, the body, the hairs of the body, the hairs of the head, the blood, and the seed—in short all that goes to constitute the self in its phenomenal aspect—are dispersed. What remains? The answer was given as a great secret to Yājña-valkya:

> Take my hand, my friend. We two alone shall know of this; let this question of ours not be discussed in public. Then these two went out and argued, and what they said was *karman*, what they praised was *karman*, viz. that a man becomes good by good work, and bad by bad work.[2]

Nevertheless men are actually bound to the world by desire. At the root of this attachment is ignorance, the ignorance that involves belief in a plurality in the universe that does not exist. The distinctions that we imagine to exist are fictitious. One of the passages in which this is most clearly laid down is in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*.

> For when there is as it were duality, when one sees the other, one smells the other, one hears the other, one salutes the other, one perceives the other, one knows the other; but when the Self only is all

[1] *Chhānd. U.* viii. 2.

[2] *Bṛih. U.* iii. 2. 13.

this, how should he smell another, &c.? How should he know him by whom he knows all this? How, O beloved, should he know (himself) the Knower?[1]

It is not merely in the realm of sense experience that this false duality is assumed. It is a distinction equally falsely made between the Self and God. This is the point of the discourses of Uddālaka Āruṇi with Śvetaketu, in which through many similes he teaches him the identity of the Self with ultimate Reality—'Thou, O Śvetaketu, art it.' If one but knows this, if he is freed from the ignorance that sees diversity where there is nothing but unity, if one understands that in all the variety of existence revealed to us through the senses and through the intelligence there is given nothing distinct from the Self, then ignorance has given place to knowledge, that knowledge which is itself deliverance.[2]

It may seem at first sight that this is to make very high claims for knowledge. Assuming the truth of the doctrine that all diversity is illusory and that Reality is one and undifferentiated, we might seem to be justified in raising the question whether merely knowing this doctrine could be sufficient to deliver one from the bondage of the illusory world. If the evil in which our life is involved is desire or attachment, is it sufficient in order that the attachment may be broken, that one's eyes should merely be opened to the illusoriness of the objects to which the self has been attached? To put it in another way, can ignorance be the root, or at any rate the only root of attachment, so that if it be severed the plant will die? We are here face to face with a problem that has affinities with that raised by Socrates regarding the identity of virtue and knowledge, for both alike held that at the root of what was essentially evil was ignorance. It may be that the difficulties that beset the problem are to a large extent due to misunderstanding. The experience described in Ovid's words:

Video meliora proboque,
deteriora sequor,

[1] *Bṛih. U.* ii. 4. 13. [2] *Chhând. U.* vi. 8 ff.

is one that is familiar to every one. Is it possible in the face of such an experience to assert that the lapse was simply due to ignorance? It might be replied that, when one sins against the light, there is involved at least momentary self-deception—a momentary forgetting of the truth accepted by our highest self. The fault may be not that knowledge was wanting, but that the knowledge was not so wrought into the web of one's being that it might not on occasion be denied. There is a sense in which moral error, when it is deliberate, involves intellectual error. A lower self rises up and asserts itself, brushing aside the principles by which the higher self would direct its conduct; it rules them out of court. The rational self is borne down for the time being by a violent, unintelligent, lower self. It will be necessary to return to this subject later, but it may be stated now that in the Upanishads deliverance is the outcome not simply of belief or knowledge of a purely academic kind, but of a knowledge, which is an attitude or activity of the whole self. It is generally taught, further, that there are steps necessary for the attainment of such knowledge; it is not to be mastered by any chance person who may hear it explained.

All this has been said with a view to making clear the rationale of a doctrine which at first seems so strange as this that deliverance is the outcome of knowledge. Yet we must admit at the same time that there are many passages in the Upanishads where the claims made on behalf of knowledge are of a much more extravagant kind, as when it is taught that knowledge of particular doctrines, for example the doctrine of the five fires, leads to emancipation. Also it should be pointed out that the term knowledge is in a sense a misleading one when applied to the process through which emancipation is mediated. As we ordinarily understand knowledge, there is involved in it a knowing subject and a known object. But the knowledge which is deliverance is a knowledge in which this duality is transcended. It is an experience which can be explained only by imperfect analogies. The most helpful of

these is dreamless sleep, a state in which the distinction of subject and object disappears.

> When a man, being asleep, reposing, and at perfect rest, sees no dreams, that is the Self, this is the immortal, the fearless, this is Brahman.[1]

The doctrine of emancipation has been stated here in its simplest and barest form; but throughout the Upanishads there are complications and contradictions in the accounts of the process through which emancipation is attained, as there are in the accounts of the fate of the unemancipated. We may turn again to the passage quoted above from the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, v. 10, which has been regarded as the great text for the Upanishad doctrine of *karma* and transmigration. The passage describing the way of the fathers has been quoted. We now quote the passage dealing with the way of the Devas which precedes it:

> Those who know this (even if they still be gṛihasthas), and those who in the forest follow faith and austerities (the vānaprasthas, and of the parivrājakas those who do not yet know the highest Brahman) go to light, from light to day, from day to the light half of the moon, from the light half of the moon to the six months when the sun goes to the north, from the six months when the sun goes to the north to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon, from the moon to the lightning. There is a person not human—He leads them to Brahman.[2]

The Brahman to whom he is led is the conditioned Brahman, and the deliverance found in him is not represented in the definite form which the doctrine later took. But it may be noted that the emancipation here spoken of is the outcome of a process which goes on after death. Elsewhere we meet the same idea in other forms. It may be said that emancipation is regarded as attained broadly in two ways, firstly immediately through an act of intellectual intuition, and secondly through a process dependent chiefly on intellectual intuition, but working itself out gradually.

[1] *Chhānd. U.* viii. 11. 1.
[2] *Ib.* v. 10. 1. 2.

In this brief account of the doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsāra* in their relation to the way of deliverance nothing more has been attempted than a summary of the ideas most generally accepted. But there are many statements relating not only to details but even to fundamentals which would demand attention in any fuller treatment. These we must for the present ignore, contenting ourselves with indicating the general tendency of the thought of the Upanishads. Mention should, however, be made of a tendency which becomes more definite in some of the later Upanishads. The earlier Upanishads represent in the main a strict pantheistic monism ; Brahman is all, and all else is illusion, and deliverance is attained in the recognition of the identity of the self with Brahman. In some of the later Upanishads, on the other hand, for example the *Kaṭha*, the *Praśna*, and others, there are traces, though sometimes obscure, of that dualistic conception of the Universe which becomes definite in the Sāṁkhya Philosophy. Nevertheless *karma* and *saṁsāra* remain practically untouched, and deliverance is still attained through knowledge, though not knowledge of the sole reality of Brahma.

II

So far we have hardly even touched the ethical problem of the Upanishads. To it we must turn now. The most important question that faces us at this stage of our inquiry is as to the ethical character of the ideal that is held up to man. Is this state of deliverance a state that has ethical worth? It will be impossible to consider this question fully until we have discussed the steps through which one arrives at the stage at which deliverance becomes possible, but certain points have already become clear to us. It is obvious that in a certain sense ethical categories are inapplicable. He who has attained *moksha* is beyond good and evil. Good and evil exist only for him who is in the state of *avidyā* ; he who has been delivered from ignorance is delivered from that immersion in the finite which that ignorance involves.

As water does not cling to a lotus leaf, so no evil deed clings to one who knows it.[1]

'He therefore that knows it, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient, and collected, sees self in Self, sees all as Self. Evil does not overcome him, he overcomes all evil. Evil does not burn him, he burns all evil. Free from evil, free from spots, free from doubts, he becomes a (true) Brāhmaṇa; this is the Brahma-world, O King, thus spoke Yājñavalkya.[2]

Clearly there is room here for the greatest self-deception, and there are traces of such self-deception in various parts of the Upanishads. If he who has attained deliverance be beyond good and evil, then good and evil may be regarded as indifferent to him, and if they be indifferent they may be practised without blame. This is the line of argument that seems to have sometimes been taken. It is similar to that sometimes taken by Antinomians in the Christian Church. If a man be saved he is free from sin; he is lifted up into a relationship with God that removes him beyond the possibility of sinning. So acts, which performed by the unregenerate, would be sinful, may be performed by him without incurring guilt. The reply to both is the same—that he who is really delivered will have 'died to sin' in a different sense from that in which the Antinomian understands the situation. He will no longer follow after evil, for evil actions will have ceased to have any attraction for him.

Yet this Antinomian tendency is found in the Upanishads, sometimes in extreme form. It comes out in passages like this:

He who knows me thus, by no deed of his is his life harmed, not by the murder of his mother, not by the murder of his father, not by theft, not by the killing of a Brāhman. If he is going to commit a sin, the bloom does not depart from his face.[3]

Or more striking still:

He (in that state) is the highest person. He moves about there laughing (or eating), playing, and rejoicing (in his mind), be it with

[1] *Chhānd. U.* iv. 14. 3. [2] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 23.
[3] *Kaush. U.* iii. 1.

women, carriages, or relatives, never minding that body into which he was born.[1]

While such statements as these are in one aspect simply exaggerations of the idea that for him who has found deliverance all morality is transcended, we doubtless see in them also a reflection of the eschatological conceptions of older writings in which heaven is conceived very sensually. Even in its highest flights of thought, the Indian mind at this time found it difficult to shake off those sensual elements that had come to find a place in its conception of the highest good. On the other hand, the highest good of the Upanishads is at its best a state of being in which all ethical distinctions are transcended.

The ethical side of the teaching of the Upanishads comes out rather in relation to the preparation that is supposed to be necessary before the individual is in a position to be able to attain deliverance. It belongs therefore to a lower stage of experience. In this the attitude of the Upanishads is paralleled by that of some other schools of thought. Aristotle put speculative wisdom above practical wisdom, and if he gave more space to the discussion of the forms in which practical wisdom should manifest itself, that was simply due to his recognition that in these the mass of humanity must inevitably express themselves. The Stoics made an even more sharp division between the life that was lived in line with the highest ideal and the lower life of the ordinary man. The ideal was realized in the life of the passionless sage, and all who had not yet attained to this stage of passionlessness were involved in sin, and all sin was equal in guilt. This conception was not followed out with absolutely rigorous logic. Common sense came in and prevented the ordinary, everyday life of ordinary men from thus being denuded of all ethical significance. But it is interesting to note that here there is expressed in theory, a separation between the ideal as attained, and everyday life which is comparable to that drawn in the Upanishads. Practically, of course, it does not work out. The Stoic has to find a place for the lower goods which he would fain ignore as

[1] *Chhând. U.* viii. 12. 3.

unworthy of the thought of the sage, and the writers of the Upanishads to whom the sole reality is Brahman are compelled nevertheless to recognize the significance of the life lived by men who have not attained deliverance, and to lay down rules for its conduct. This is all the more necessary on account of the fact that it is recognized generally, though by no means in all the Upanishads, that deliverance is attainable only as the outcome of a process. It may not be attained by any one at any stage of life. No doubt all lower manifestations of human life are in the end valueless. Study, sacrifice, morality, austerity, knowledge itself[1]—all these ultimately count for nothing, but there is a sense in which they constitute a ladder on which one climbs to the height at which the highest good becomes attainable. So it is of importance that we should study the discipline that is thus demanded of him who would find deliverance.

This discipline may be said to be summed up in the doctrine of the four *āśramas*. This doctrine as we find it in the Upanishads is not fully formed as we have found it to have been by the time when *dharma* was systematized, but the elements that constitute the life lived in the *āśramas* are all recognized. The course of life laid down for the Brāhman by this doctrine when fully developed was (1) the life of a *Brahmachārī* spent in Vedic study in the house of his *Guru*, (2) that of a *Gṛihastha* or householder, living with his wife and begetting children, and performing a great variety of worldly duties, (3) that of the *Vānaprastha*, living in the forest and practising austerities, and (4) that of the *Sannyāsī* or *Parivrājaka*, who, casting away everything, wanders about a homeless beggar. It is not until we come to the late Upanishads that we find these four *āśramas* recognized as definite stages in the life of the Brāhman who would find deliverance, but in the great Upanishads the essential features that characterize life in these different *āśramas* are recognized. In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka U.*, for example, the elements that enter into the life lived in the

[1] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 10.

āśramas are mentioned though they are not represented as belonging to distinct stages:

> Brāhmaṇas seek to know him by the study of the Veda, by sacrifice, by gifts, by penance, by fasting, and he who knows him becomes a Muni.[1]

In the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* it would seem that the four stages are recognized, though not according to their order in time or with that definiteness that enables us to recognize them as identical with the *āśramas*.

> There are three branches of the law. Sacrifice, study, and charity are the first.
>
> Austerity is the second, and to dwell as a *Brahmachārī* in the house of a tutor, always mortifying the body in the house of a tutor, is the third. All these obtain the worlds of the blessed; but the *Brahmasaṁstha* alone (he who is firmly grounded in Brahman) obtains immortality.[2]

Here we seem to have three of the *āśramas*, or rather modes of life which are the basis of the *āśramas*, fairly clearly indicated, a fourth mode being added which perhaps corresponds to the *āśrama* of the *sannyāsī*.

There is another passage in the same Upanishad in which there is evidence that the different *āśramas* were beginning to be recognized. There it is stated that the way to the attainment of the world of Brahman is by learning the Veda from a family of teachers in the leisure left from the duties to be performed for the Guru, then settling in his own house, keeping up the memory of what he has learnt, and begetting virtuous sons, and (probably as a third stage) concentrating all his senses on the Self, never giving pain to any creature except at the *tīrthas*. In this case the third and fourth stages would be merged in one. In the *Chhāndogya*,[3] the householder who practises sacrifices and good works is contrasted with the householder who knows the doctrine of the five fires, and the forest-dweller who follows faith and austerities, the former going by the way of the Fathers and the latter by the way of

[1] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 22. [2] *Chhānd. U.* ii. 23. 1. [3] *Ib.* v. 10.

the Devas. Again in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*[1] the oblations and sacrifices of the householder and the penance of the anchorite are works that will have an end. But he who knows the Akshara, he is a Brāhman. A careful study of the relevant passages will probably lead one to adopt Deussen's conclusion that in the earlier Upanishads only three stages are recognized—those of the student, the householder, and the anchorite—those who know the *Ātman* being 'exalted above the *āśramas*'.[2] The first Upanishad in which the four stages are mentioned in their proper order is the late *Jābāla*.

It would seem that the tendency is to regard these stages in the life of the individual as important as a preparation for the attainment of emancipation. Certainly they are not universally regarded as essential. This is indicated by the following passage:

> Knowing this the people of old did not wish for offspring. What shall we do with offspring, they said, we who have this Self and this world (of Brahman)?[3]

Again it is indicated that saving knowledge may be possessed even by the householder, and Nachiketas obtained Brahman while still a boy.[4] Again, Max Müller was of opinion that the doctrine of the *Īśā Upanishad* was that works (the stages of student and householder) were necessary as a preparatory discipline before one could become a *sannyāsī* as against the doctrine held by many that they were unnecessary.[5]

Let us look at these stages in turn. The first is that of Vedic study, which was the chief business of the *brahmachārī*. The boy was sent to the house of a teacher, probably as a rule at the age of twelve. He approached him bearing fuel as a symbol of his willingness to serve him. The teacher received him and laid upon him various duties. The *brahmachārī* might be sent out to beg, he tended the teacher's fires, and one case is mentioned where he was sent by the Guru to tend his cows. It would seem that all this discipline was intended

[1] *Bṛih. U.* iii. 8. 10.
[2] *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, 368.
[3] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 22.
[4] *Kaṭha U.* i.
[5] *S.B.E.* i. 319.

by the Guru to test the worthiness of the pupil to receive instruction. The nature of the instruction given seems to have varied greatly. Śvetaketu, we are told, studied 'all the Vedas'[1] during his twelve years' apprenticeship, and we gather that 'all' means *Ṛik*, *Yajus*, and *Sāman*. It would seem that the committing to memory of the Vedas and hearing the explanations of them given by the Guru were the essential parts of the pupil's intellectual training. These explanations would vary with the Guru's own capacity and point of view, and with the estimate he formed of the capacity and worth of his pupil. In some cases the instruction must have been of a very superficial order, puffing up instead of edifying the pupil. Those who showed special promise would be taken into the deeper questions that the Guru had studied. Satyakāma allowed his other pupils to depart when they had learnt the sacred books, but Upakośala was detained for further instruction when he should be fit for it.[2] It is characteristic of the Indian Guru that he imparts the highest instruction very reluctantly and as a profound secret, only to those whom he considers fit to receive it.

> Take my hand, my friend. We two alone shall know of this: let this question of ours not be discussed in public.[3]

Again:

> A father may therefore tell that doctrine of Brahman to his eldest son, or to a worthy pupil. But no one should tell it to anybody else, even if he gave him the whole sea-girt earth full of treasure, for this doctrine is worth more than that; yea, it is worth more.[4]

In addition to the Vedic study which he had to undertake, the student was given instruction and had to undergo discipline the purpose of which was to fit him ethically for the duties of life. The mortification of the body was part of this discipline. Further, there were the duties that had to be performed in the service of the Guru, which have been already referred to. It

[1] *Chhānd. U.* vi. 1. 2.
[2] *Ib.* iv. 10. 1.
[3] *Bṛih. U.* iii. 2. 13.
[4] *Chhānd. U.* iii. 11. 5.

was in the leisure left from these duties that the Vedas were to be studied. The period of studentship was one of hard work, in subjection to the Guru, to whom he owed the highest honour. The sum of his ethical counsel to his pupil is probably contained in the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, in the passage in which the Guru in dismissing his pupil declares to him the true purport of the Veda.[1] The advice is given with a view to the pupil's entrance upon the responsibilities of a householder, but one or two of the points are of interest as bearing upon the relation of the pupil to the Guru. In his conduct he should follow the example of the Guru, and in case of doubt regarding sacred acts and regarding conduct he should conduct himself as Brāhmans who possess good judgement conduct themselves in the same matter.

The period of studentship was not such a definite one as this brief sketch might seem to indicate. A student might remain in the house of the Guru for an indefinite period, and we read of men at all periods of life coming to teachers with fuel in their hands seeking instruction. Even the god Indra is said to have come thus as a pupil to Prajāpati. The teacher again was not in all cases a Brāhman belonging to a family of teachers. So important is the part played by kings and Kshatriyas generally in the exposition of the ideas which are expressed in the Upanishads, that some have maintained that the Upanishads represented at first a movement among the Kshatriyas against the ritualistic lines on which the thought of the Brāhmans moved. Again, a father might play the part of Guru to his son, as did the father of Śvetaketu when the latter returned from his course of study with his mind swollen with empty knowledge. The important point to observe is that while there was great variety in the form that studentship took, the need of a teacher seems to have been universally recognized. This comes out in the following quotation:

> For I have heard from men like you, Sir, that only knowledge which is learnt from a teacher leads to real good.[2]

[1] *Taitt. U.* i. 11. [2] *Chhānd. U.* iv. 9. 3.

So, regarding the knowledge of the *Ātman* it is said:

> Unless it be taught by another, there is no way to it.[1]

Having finished his studentship, the young man normally entered upon the second stage of life, that of the *gṛihastha*, or householder. 'Do not cut off the line of children', is one of the injunctions given by the Guru to the departing *brahmachārī*.[2] This was the most important motive to the entrance upon the second stage—the continuance of one's line. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is said that man owes debts—to the gods, sacrifices, to the seers, study of the Vedas, to the Manes, offspring, and to man, hospitality; and there persists to the present day belief in the supreme importance of having a son to survive one and perform those ceremonies that are due to the Manes. In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* the world of men is distinguished from that of the Fathers and that of the Devas, and it is said that 'this world can be gained by a son only, not by any other work'. When a father dies, 'if there is anything done amiss by the father, of all that the son delivers him, and therefore he is called *Putra*, son. By help of his son the father stands firm in this world (the world of men).'[3]

The householder must also continue his Vedic studies, and he must perform sacrifices. The latter duty will require somewhat closer attention. It is not easy at all points to determine what was the attitude of the composers of the Upanishads to sacrifice. In places it seems to be disparaged, but probably in general the feeling was that sacrificial ideas and practices were so firmly rooted in Indian thought and life that it was hopeless to attempt to eradicate them. We have always to remember in studying the Upanishads that, while they teach as the highest doctrine the way of complete and final emancipation, they nevertheless recognize lower stages of attainment and attach worth to the means by which these are reached. It is characteristic of the Hindu mind all down

[1] *Kaṭha U.* i. 2. 8. [2] *Taitt. U.* i. 11. 1. [3] *Bṛih. U.* i. 5. 17.

through history that it has been willing to compromise, and, indeed, in its recognition of the position of the 'weaker brother' it has sometimes tended to do less than justice to the stronger brother. The value of the sacrifice is limited, but still it has its value. They are fools who consider sacrifice and good works as the best, but through them the lower world of the fathers is attained, and so far they are good.[1] So sacrifice is frequently mentioned as one of the essential duties of the householder without any qualification, the implication being that the sacrifices as they were laid down in the Brāhmaṇas were approved. But, on the other hand, we sometimes find the sacrifices treated allegorically. The worshipper no longer, as in the Brāhmaṇas, climbs up to heaven as on a ladder on the steps of the ritual, but the various aspects of the ritual are allegorized, sometimes ethically. There is a very striking passage in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* in which the sacrifice is thus allegorized. The *dīkshā* or initiatory rite is here stated to consist in fasting and abstention from pleasure, and the gifts to the priests in penance, liberality, righteousness, kindness, and truthfulness.[2] Again we have such a passage as this:

> Understanding performs the sacrifice, it performs all sacred acts.[3]

So sacrifice was recognized, probably as a concession to the less enlightened. The more enlightened, if they recognized it at all, would give to it such an allegorical interpretation.

The householder must practise, along with sacrifice, certain more strictly ethical virtues. The *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (V, 10, 3) speaks generally of works of public utility and alms, but elsewhere there are more detailed lists of ethical virtues and vices.

> A man who steals gold, who drinks spirits, who dishonours his Guru's bed, who kills a Brāhman, these four fall, and as a fifth he who associates with them.

A king boasts that in his kingdom there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without an altar in his house, no ignorant

[1] *Muṇḍ. U.* i. 2. 10. [2] *Chhānd. U.* iii. 17. [3] *Taitt. U.* ii. 5.

person, no adulterer, much less an adulteress.[1] The duty of hospitality is inculcated:

Let him never turn away (a stranger) from his house, that is the rule.[2]

Among other ethical qualities mentioned are right-dealing, self-restraint and tranquillity, while pride is condemned. In the later *Maitrāyaṇa Upanishad* there are given lists of evils that are the results of the qualities of '*tamas*' (darkness), and '*rajas*' (passion). The results of the former are: bewilderment, fear, grief, sleep, sloth, carelessness, decay, sorrow, hunger, thirst, niggardliness, wrath, infidelity, ignorance, envy, cruelty, folly, shamelessness, meanness, pride, changeability. And the results of the latter are: inward thirst, fondness, passion, covetousness, unkindness, love, hatred, deceit, jealousy, vain restlessness, fickleness, unstableness, emulation, greed, patronising of friends, family pride, aversion to disagreeable objects, devotion to agreeable objects, whispering, prodigality.[3] These qualities are connected with philosophical conceptions foreign to the earlier Upanishads, but we may take it that the evils named were regarded as such by the composers of the Upanishads generally.

When a man had fulfilled his duties as a householder he might enter upon the third stage of life—that of the *vānaprastha* or anchorite. Yājñavalkya, for example, is said to have abandoned the life of a householder and to have gone into the forest. This was not yet by any means a well-defined stage of life. The form that it should take was not laid down with any definiteness. It was fairly generally, though by no means universally, recognized that *tapas*, (austerity), was of value as a means towards the attainment of the knowledge of the Ātman. It would seem that throughout the Upanishads *tapas*, which might be practised at any stage, takes the place of what later came to be the third *āśrama*. The householder and the student are mentioned as alike practising *tapas*. Again, in so

[1] *Chhānd. U.* v. 11. 5.
[2] *Taitt. U.* iii. 10. 1.
[3] *Maitrā. U.* iii. 5.

far as a distinct stage of life in which the individual withdraws to the forest seems to be recognized, the precise function of it as a stage does not appear with perfect clearness. It is not clearly marked off from what came to be recognized as the fourth *āśrama*. The experience referred to by Yājñavalkya in the following passage has as close affinities with the fourth as with the third *āśrama*:

> When Brāhmans know that Self and have risen above the desire for sons, wealth, and worlds, they wander about as mendicants.[1]

Here there seems to be no distinct intermediate stage between that of householder and that of *sannyāsī*. On the other hand, there are cases recorded that correspond more closely to the idea of the anchorite, who went to the forest and practised austerities as a preparation for the attainment of the knowledge of the Self. Wishing for the world of Brahman, it is said, mendicants leave their homes.[2] King Bṛihadratha performed the highest penance with uplifted arms in the forest, and yet did not know the Self.[3] It is generally taught that the practice of austerities in itself leads only to the world of the fathers, and there seems to have been difference of opinion, at any rate in the later Upanishads, as to whether *tapas* had any value as a means to the knowledge of the Self. But to this subject of *tapas* we shall return later.

In the later Upanishads the life of the *sannyāsī* is dealt with in great detail, but in the classical Upanishads, as has been said, this stage is not clearly separated from the third. It became recognized in later times as a form of life in which the individual cast off all ties of family and caste and became a homeless wanderer, and it was entered upon as the last stage in the process leading to the knowledge of the Self. In the older Upanishads this was the state rather of him who had attained this knowledge—the *Brahmasaṁstha*, or *Muni*.

[1] *Bṛih. U.* iii. 5. 1. [2] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 22.
[3] *Maitrā. U.* i. 2.

III

It will now be necessary for us to turn back and try to gather together and to find the rationale of the ethical ideas contained in the material with which we have been dealing. The Upanishads are not a text-book of ethics. It has become clear to us that in their ethical as well as in their metaphysical speculations they present us with a wealth of ideas often far from consistent with each other. In our consideration of these ideas it is well that we should bear in mind the fact that in morality practice is older than theory. Morality was not invented by moral philosophers, and opinion is greatly divided as to the extent to which it has been influenced by them. Moral philosophers have always had before them in their speculations, as a fact that cannot be ignored, the moral life lived about them. This actual moral life and the vaguely understood ideals that underlie it they may criticize at many points; they may even, as Plato did in the *Republic*, propose to replace it by a new social order, or they may propose such a radical alteration of moral values as Nietzsche has proposed, but in any case the new will inevitably bear marks of the influence of the old. The philosophers of India were familiar with a system of morality, if system it can be called, of very variegated texture, and if they failed to supply in its place a system in any way perfect, it was more their misfortune than their blame. They did not set out primarily to justify or reform the morality of their time; their purpose was of a different kind; and if the stubborn material of which morality is built did not yield to them as we may think it ought to have done, and if they were constrained to fit it into their greater structure as it could be fitted in, we must remember the limitations under which they wrought.

These thinkers were, most of them, possessed of one dominating conception—that of the identity of the Self and Brahman. The beginner in the study of the Upanishads may wonder why this idea did not dominate everything, but the fact

remains that there were other ideas, often conflicting no doubt, yet stubborn, that demanded a place alongside this idea. As metaphysicians these thinkers might be convinced of the sole reality of the Ātman, and in the light of this grand conception all else might be regarded as illusion—study, sacrifice, and penance, as well as the ordinary duties of everyday morality. In the highest flights of their thought and imagination they might realize and fearlessly declare this. Yet the practical life lived about them, and the intellectual conceptions by which it was justified, continually obtruded themselves upon them; and if they often admitted these conceptions to a place to which logic did not entitle them, we have to remember that even the philosophers of the Upanishads were human. It is well, then, that we should consider in the first place the influence of the dominating conception of the Upanishads upon ethical thought, and then the ways in which other conceptions crossed it.

It has already been indicated that while emancipation is conceived to be attained through knowledge, and while this knowledge is apt to be regarded after the manner of a purely intellectual intuition, it is probably more accurate to interpret it as an activity, or perhaps better a passivity, of the whole being. Any one might apprehend intellectually the idea that the Self is Brahman, but such a purely intellectual apprehension would not involve emancipation. For this, belief of some kind would be necessary, and belief is not a barely intellectual act, but one that involves also feeling and volition. If this be so it is clear that to attain emancipation something more is necessary than merely hearing the dogma enunciated, 'Thou art that', more even than the understanding of the whole philosophy of which this statement is the highest expression. In particular it is essential that there should be some preliminary education of the will. And the education of the will would differ essentially from that which has been common in the West, at any rate in regard to the kind of direction which should be given to the will. The Christian believes in a

Kingdom of Heaven, of which the kingdoms of this world are in their measure reflections, and the qualities that fit one for citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven fit one in this measure for citizenship in an earthly kingdom. The morality of the West has been profoundly influenced by some such conception as this. In the light of the doctrine of the Ātman, on the other hand, social morality has no such eternal significance. The will has to be directed with a view to the attainment of a certain end, but the end is external to the means, and when it is attained the means have no longer any significance. This is a fundamental distinction between the point of view of Christianity and the Upanishads. The Christian believes that in ethical experience he is in touch with that which is essentially real, while the writers of the Upanishads believed that so far as morality was necessary at all, it was necessary only as a step on which one might climb to something higher, over which one might climb to reality, but which in itself belonged to the sphere of the Unreal. The attainment of Brahman was believed to be possible not for him whose will was directed in accordance with the highest social ideals, but by him whose will was turned away from all this.

The end is knowledge of the identity of the Ātman and Brahman, or realization of this identity, mediated through belief, as it may perhaps be more accurately put. What ethical presuppositions or ethical preparation does such a belief involve? We may pass over some of the more elementary and fundamental duties which are frequently insisted on, such as truthfulness, abstention from murder, theft, and the like. Whether these duties are recognized in practice or not it is hard to conceive any system of morality that denies their importance. The more flagrant breaches of these duties are not only sins but crimes. But there are other points in the morality of the Upanishads that are more distinctive and instructive. As a positive hindrance to the attainment of the end there is sensuality. Human nature is prone to seek its good in those things that bring pleasure or minister to comfort,

and it is a familiar psychological fact that immersion in the pleasures of sense renders understanding of and belief in the value of spiritual ideas difficult. In a very special manner do they operate as hindrances to the attainment of the end as it is conceived in the Upanishads. For whatever helps to strengthen belief in the existence of the individual self as an independent being, and in the reality of the phenomenal world stands in manifest contradiction to the great principle in which the end is expressed. Let us look at some of the passages in which this thought is set forth.

> The good and the pleasant approach man; the wise goes round about them and distinguishes them. Yea, the wise prefers the good to the pleasant, but the fool chooses the pleasant through greed and avarice.
>
> . . . .
>
> Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round, staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind.
>
> The Hereafter never rises before the eyes of the careless child, deluded by the delusion of wealth. 'This is the world', he thinks, 'there is no other';—thus he falls again and again under my (i.e. Death's) sway.[1]

Another aspect of the case is put, when Sanatkumāra pours scorn on worldly men who 'call cows and horses, elephants and gold, slaves, wives, fields, and houses greatness'. For, he says, 'there is no bliss in anything finite'.[2]

Not only are pleasure and the things that minister to pleasure hindrances to the attainment of the end, but everything that breaks in on the calm of the soul, entangling it with the world, is likewise evil—'hunger, thirst, sorrow, and passion.'[3] Similarly pride is a hindrance to the highest knowledge.

> You are worthy of Brahman, O Gautama, because you are not led away by pride. Come hither, I shall make you know clearly.[4]

All appetites and passions, by whatever name we designate the various expressions of the feeling side of our nature, all

[1] *Kaṭha U.* i. 2. 2, 5, 6.
[2] *Chhānd. U.* vii. 24. 2, vii. 23.
[3] *Bṛih. U.* iii. 5. 1.
[4] *Kaush. U.* i. 1. 1.

must be restrained. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad* there is a figure remarkable because of its close likeness in some points to Plato's figure in the *Phaedrus*:

> Know the Self to be sitting in the chariot, the body to be the chariot, the intellect (*buddhi*) the charioteer, and the mind the reins.
>
> The senses they call the horses, the objects of the senses their roads.
>
> . . . .
>
> He who has no understanding and whose mind (the reins) is never firmly held, his senses (horses) are unmanageable, like vicious horses of a charioteer.
>
> But he who has understanding and whose mind is always firmly held, his senses are under control, like good horses of a charioteer.[1]

This figure is used in connexion with philosophical terminology different from that used in the earlier Upanishads, but the main idea of the passage is characteristic of the classical Upanishads generally. Other passages of similar import are the following:

> He who has not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self (even) by knowledge.[2]

and

> He therefore that knows it, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient, and collected, sees self in Self, sees all as Self.[3]

So far the teaching of the Upanishads about morality is consistent with their conception of the end to be attained. There is no place for 'the world' in this philosophy, and the lower elements in human nature are not to be tamed in order that they may be harnessed to work that is conceived as properly belonging to them, but they are to be destroyed as evil. The teaching of the Upanishads regarding austerity does not seem at first sight to take us far from the same line of thought. For the subduing of the passions, ascetic practices or practices of an allied kind have been followed by many under the influence of the higher religions. But the history

[1] *Kaṭha U.* i. 3. 3–6. [2] *Ib.* i. 2. 24. [3] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 23.

of *tapas* in India shows that the motive to it was not always the subduing of the passions. We have found that in the earlier history of Indian religion *tapas* was praised without reference to its ethical value. The practice of certain forms of self-mortification and the self-infliction of pain are practices common to primitive religions, and the motive has been the acquisition of powers, generally of a magical kind. It is to motives such as this rather than to ethical motives that the first appearance of the idea of *tapas* is to be attributed. It is unscientific to condemn any principle or practice merely on the ground of its history. But in the Upanishads, while *tapas* is, no doubt, practised as a means to the subduing of the passions, it still bears in many places, if not in most, marks of its history. What we may call the ethical motive to *tapas* is apparent in the case of Yājñavalkya when he departed into the forest,[1] and doubtless in many other instances the motive is at least partly ethical. But it would seem that much more commonly the old idea of *tapas*, as a means to the attainment of power, is dominant. We see this, for example, in the well-known passage in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, where it is related that Upakośala practised austerities until the sacrificial fires were moved to teach him.[2]

The teaching of the Upanishads on *tapas* is, indeed, confusing. In places it is reduced to a mere figure. In one place the highest penance is said to consist in sickness, the funeral procession, and the funeral pyre,[3] the idea evidently being that sufferings deliberately undertaken are of less value than the inevitable experiences of life and death. Again, in some places where the virtue of asceticism is recognized it is held that it leads only to a finite reward :

> Whosoever, O Gārgī, without knowing that Akshara (the imperishable) offers oblations in this world, sacrifices and performs penance for a thousand years, his work will have an end.[4]

Again, especially in the later of the classical Upanishads,

[1] *Bṛih. U.* ii. 4. 1.
[2] *Chhānd. U.* iv. 10.
[3] *Bṛih. U.* v. 11.
[4] *Ib.* iii. 8. 10.

we find greater claims made for *tapas*. Bhṛigu was taught by his father to seek to know Brahman through *tapas*, and having performed *tapas* he understood one truth after another till he recognized bliss as Brahman.[1] In the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* it is said that the Self is to be sought through truthfulness and penance, and that the roots of the Self are self-knowledge and penance.[2] In the *Praśna Upanishad* the way to the Self is said to be through 'penance, abstinence, faith, and knowledge',[3] while in the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* it is said that 'those who practise penance and faith in the forest, tranquil, wise, and living on alms, depart free from passion through the sun to where that immortal Person dwells whose nature is imperishable'.[4] Perhaps all that we are justified in saying regarding *tapas* in the classical Upanishads is that while at times it seems to be practised as a means of gaining control over the passions, at other times it is regarded as a means for the acquisition of supernatural power: while there is also to be seen a tendency to regard it as having no value at all.

It has been remarked already that there is no logical place for social morality in a system of thought, the dominating conception of which is that of the identity of the self and Brahman. This is in some measure recognized in the predominantly negative character of many of the duties which are most highly esteemed. The highest life is one in which social life with all its ties and interests is renounced, and among the highest virtues are those qualities that mark a loosening of the hold that these ties have on the individual. Yet we have to face the fact that the state of the *gṛihastha* is one that is considered honourable; frequently even it is spoken of as essential in the life of him who would attain saving knowledge. This becomes all the more remarkable when we consider that the great end of the *gṛihastha's* being is the begetting of a son. It might seem that, if the highest good be

[1] *Taitt. U.* iii. [2] *Śvet. U.* i. 15–16. [3] *Praśna U.* i. 10.
[4] *Muṇḍ. U.* i. 2. 11.

deliverance from *saṁsāra*, then the bringing into the world of beings who should be involved in the circle of *saṁsāra* would be above all things to be condemned. This difficulty does not seem to have been raised in this acute form; but if it had been raised the reply would probably have been that in begetting children one is not starting new beings on the round of *saṁsāra*, but providing bodies for beings who are already on it. But in any case the fact remains that the recognition of the duty of perpetuating the race is based upon a conception which stands in no direct relation to the fundamental conception of the Upanishads, but rather stands in contradiction to it, viz. the conception of the existence of the departed in the world of the fathers. These two conceptions of the destiny of the departed—as living on in a world apart from this, and as reincarnated in this world—appear side by side in the Upanishads, and there seems to be no consciousness of any contradiction. The contradiction has persisted in Hindu thought and practice in spite of all attempts to explain it away. Considered psychologically, the recognition of the place of the *gṛihastha* is a concession to the facts of human nature. Whatever life may be to the philosopher, to the average man it is good, and no philosophy will persuade him that the natural life lived in the family is something to be eschewed. There were ardent youths like Upakośala whose whole being was devoted to the attainment of the knowledge of the Self, but the thinkers of the Upanishads were forced frankly to recognize that for the normal man the attitude of mind that made saving knowledge as they regarded it possible, would be attainable only after the first freshness of life had gone. They believed that at the best the life lived in the world was a lower life, leading to no abiding good. Through it the higher stage might be reached, but in itself it had no value in relation to the higher stage.

Knowing this (the Self) the people of old did not wish for offspring. What shall we do with offspring, they said, we who have this Self and this world (of Brahman). . . . For desire for sons is desire for wealth,

and desire for wealth is desire for worlds. Both these are desires only. He is the Self to be described by No, No.[1]

And so they accepted the traditional justification of the householder's duties, contradictory though it was to their central doctrine.

The case is similar with the ethical duties of liberality and hospitality, frequently enjoined in the Upanishads, as we found them to be in the Law Books. The ground for the duty of liberality is to be found in the obligation recognized as early as the *Ṛig Veda*, of bestowing liberal gifts on the sacrificing priests. There we found an element that contributed to the doctrine of *karma* in the idea of *ishṭāpūrta*. Gifts to the priests are still recognized in the Upanishads as essential in connexion with the sacrifice, and are put on the same plane as the sacrifice itself as part of the householder's duty. It was probably, partly at least, as an extension of this duty of giving to the priests that liberality and kindness to others in general came to be praised. This is suggested by the passage quoted above in which the sacrifice is treated allegorically, where it is said:

Penance, liberality, righteousness, kindness, truthfulness, these form his *Dakshiṇās*.[2]

The rise of a mendicant class subsisting on alms would also contribute to the development of the virtues of liberality and kindness, for the recognition of the duty of withdrawing from the world and subsisting on alms implies a corresponding duty of satisfying the needs of the mendicant. So alms-giving figures prominently as a virtue.

The ground for the duty of hospitality is probably different. We found that it too was recognized in the *Ṛig Veda*, and it is probable that it is to be traced back, as has been said in the last chapter, to the idea common among primitive peoples that the stranger has certain powers over one for good or evil, and that failure to entertain him hospitably may lead to his

[1] *Bṛih. U.* iv. 4. 22.

[2] *Chhānd. U.* iii. 17. 4.

bringing bad luck to a household. There are few traces of such an idea in the Upanishads, but it is possible that we find it lingering in such a passage as this:

> Let him never turn away (a stranger) from his house, that is the rule. Therefore a man should by all means acquire much food, for (good) people say (to the stranger): 'There is food ready for him'. If he gives food amply, food is given to him amply. If he gives food fairly, food is given to him fairly. If he gives food meanly, food is given to him meanly.[1]

So there is recognized in the Upanishads in these various ways the duty of kindness towards others, the duty of liberality, hospitality, and alms-giving, each of these virtues having a different root. All this doubtless helped on very greatly to a recognition of the more important social virtues, which can find no justification by reference to the central conception of the Upanishads.

[1] *Taitt. U.* iii. 10. 1.

CHAPTER II

BUḌDHIST AND JAIN ETHICS, AND EGOISTIC HEDONISM

THERE are contained in the Upanishads the germs of the great Hindu philosophical systems. The most famous of these is the Vedānta, a system of philosophy which found its ablest and most impressive exponent in Śaṅkarāchārya. In our discussion of the ethics of the Upanishads, for the sake of clearness, we went on the assumption that their philosophical groundwork was on the lines of Vedantic monism. This assumption was justifiable. The great Upanishads, at any rate so far as the main lines of their teaching is concerned, admit of this monistic explanation, while, on the other hand, where other philosophical tendencies appear, their distinctive conceptions have but comparatively slight influence on the ethical outcome. At this point, however, attention may be drawn to the fact that the foundations of other systems are present in the Upanishads, and that when these systems came to be clearly differentiated from each other, certain of them were recognized as orthodox, in spite of the divergences in their doctrine. The ground for this ascription of orthodoxy was their supposed agreement with Vedic teaching. They were not the speculations of schools which rejected all authority but that which reason would admit. They were nothing more than expositions of more ancient teaching from particular standpoints.

We propose to consider now in as brief space as possible three systems of thought which lay no claim to orthodoxy, rejecting as they do the authority of the Vedic writings. They are taken at this point because they were evolved before the

six great systems received the form given to them by their chief exponents. The first two, Buddhism and Jainism, have much in common with each other, while the last, the system of the Chārvākas, has this only in common with the other two that it is equally heretical. All fall outside the main stream of Hindu thought, though the first two in particular have profoundly influenced it. It is impossible for us therefore to pass them by, and we shall consider them together now in a brief chapter.

I

Buddhism developed directly out of Brahmanism, retaining much of what was most characteristic in the Brahmanical point of view. Indeed, there is a sense in which it may be said that Buddhism in its original form was really a re-formulation on ethical lines of what was most fundamental in the existing systems of thought. The ritualistic and magical elements were rejected or relegated to a less determinative position, and the strictly ethical consequences of certain ideas which had become firmly established in the Hindu mind, especially *karma* and *saṁsāra* were brought out.[1]

Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was a Kshatriya, a member of a noble family. The circumstances of his birth determined for him, as for all Hindus, the place which he was to occupy in the social system with all that this had come to involve of duty, religious, social, and ethical. Further, from his early days his mind would be steeped in the current conceptions of the meaning of the world and of life. When he was twenty-nine years of age he took a step which had been taken by many of the higher classes—he deserted wife, home, and possessions, and entered upon the life of the religious devotee. He was moved to take this step by the dispeace of mind which had come to possess him in his participation in the enjoyments, interests, and cares of the

[1] 'Śākyamuni was the first or one of the first to give a reasonable and moral definition of Karma.' Poussin, *The Way to Nirvāṇa*, p. 67. 'Buddhists lay all the stress on the morality of actions.' *Ib.* p. 73.

world. In his dispeace of mind there came to him four visions—of a decrepit old man, a sick man, a decaying corpse, and a dignified ascetic. The visions of age, sickness, and death filled him with horror, for he realized that he himself must one day pass through these experiences. The peaceful life of the hermit, on the other hand, spent in meditation and self-discipline, seemed to him to offer a way of escape from the miseries which beset life. It is important to observe that in entering upon the ascetic life, Gautama was impelled by the same motive as has been operative all through the history of Hinduism, viz. the desire to find a way of deliverance for his own soul from the round of *karma* and *saṁsāra*. We do not know with certainty what philosophical training he had received. Efforts have been made to prove a close connexion between his later doctrine and those ideas which formed the basis of the Sāṁkhya philosophy. But so far as our ethical study is concerned this is a matter of little importance, for the philosophical ideas involved in his ethical teaching are not the property of any single school.

Gautama shared the belief which was practically universally held by Hindus, that through *tapas* or austerities it was possible to acquire great merit. We have seen that *tapas* was regarded from two points of view; on the one hand, it had efficacy of a magical or quasi-magical order, bringing to him who practised it superhuman powers which he might exercise over nature, his fellow-men, and even the gods; on the other hand, it came, particularly in the Upanishads, to be regarded from a more properly ethical point of view, as a discipline that had value in loosening the bonds binding the soul to the things of sense, and thus helping it to the attainment of that discrimination or knowledge, that insight into the true nature of reality, which meant deliverance. These two points of view were not as a rule held in opposition to each other, but the attitude of the average man to *tapas* would probably show the influence of both. To Gautama it was the ethical potency of austerities which made its appeal. He gathered round him

five disciples, and along with them he gave himself to the practice of *tapas*, continuing it for six years with such rigour that his body became utterly emaciated. In all this he simply was doing what many had done before him. But there were elements in the character of Gautama which prevented him from finding peace in the ascetic life. The distrust which he felt of all kinds of forms and ritual came to extend itself to the physical exercises of *tapas*. Living in an atmosphere charged with superstition he possessed a mind wonderfully free from any superstitious taint. His austerities failed to achieve for him the ethical purpose for the attainment of which he had undertaken them, and he could not believe in their efficacy to bring to him gifts of any other kind. So at the end of his six years of physical discipline his pain of mind was as deep as it had been at the beginning. One day from sheer weakness he fell down in a swoon. On his recovery he reflected that he had done all that could be done through *tapas*, and that he could hope for no more from it. So he determined to give it up.

His followers looked upon his departure from the life of severe austerity as terrible apostasy, and they forthwith deserted him. He had to enter upon the great critical struggle of his life alone. Seated under the Bo tree, he spent a day in deep meditation, passing in review his past efforts and realizing their utter valuelessness. Must the quest for a way of salvation be given up, and was there nothing to be done but to return to the worldly life which he had resigned, or was there any other means by which he might attain the goal which he had so long sought in vain? At the end of the day he came to clear light; he saw with perfect clearness the cause of the misery of life and the way of escape from it. He had become Buddha, the enlightened one. The problem and its solution had come to take a different form from what they had taken in the thought of the religious teachers whose influence was dominant in India, and, indeed, the problem which he solved was a different one from that the solution of which he

sought when he embarked first on the religious life. The salvation sought by the religious inquirers who had preceded him had been individual salvation. They had no social Gospel; each must by himself work out his own salvation, and the solitude of the jungle offered the best surroundings for its attainment. But during the great day of struggle and of victory Gautama's thoughts travelled far beyond the misery which he himself had experienced to that which oppressed mankind as a whole, and when enlightenment came to him it came in the form of a Gospel which he must pass on to all.

The essential truths to which he attained are known as the Four Noble Truths. They may be summarized as follows:

1. That all those experiences connected with individual existence, and all those experiences which serve to impress on the mind the idea of separate existence are full of suffering and sorrow.

2. That desire—the 'thirst' which finds pleasure in objects or craves for the satisfaction of needs—is the root of suffering.

3. That the way to the extinction of sorrow and suffering is through the quenching of this 'thirst'.

4. That the way to attain this is through the Noble Path of a virtuous and meditative life.

This Noble Path has eight divisions:

1. Right belief.
2. Right aims.
3. Right words.
4. Right actions.
5. Right mode of livelihood.
6. Right endeavour.
7. Right mindfulness.
8. Right meditation.

There are also four stages of this path, viz. (1) Conversion, (2) the path of those who will return only once to the world, (3) the path of those who will never return, and (4) the path of the Arahats. These stages are marked by progressive deliverance from the ten fetters by which the natural man is bound. These fetters are:

1. Delusion of self.
2. Doubt (as to the Buddha and his doctrines).
3. Belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies.

Deliverance from these brings one into the second stage, where begins the process of purification from

4. Sensuality.
5. Malevolence.

In the course of the third stage these fetters are completely destroyed. The seeker now becomes an Arahat, in which stage he is freed from

6. Love of life on earth.
7. Desire of life in heaven.
8. Pride.
9. Self-righteousness.
10. Ignorance.

Having broken all these fetters he attains Nirvāṇa. There has been much controversy as to the precise connotation of this term. Professor Rhys Davids has defined it as 'the extinction of that sinful, grasping condition of mind and heart, which would otherwise, according to the great mystery of Karma, be the cause of renewed individual existence'. We shall not stop at present to examine this definition. It brings out at any rate the point which is of greatest importance for us here, viz. that Nirvāṇa is a state in which *individual* existence ceases, whether in this world or in another.

In connexion with this brief statement it is desirable that we should emphasize a few facts. First of all it will be noted that Gautama started from the same position from which orthodox Hindu religious thinking had always taken its start. The fundamental evil was conceived to be individual existence as the ground of desire, which, in turn, was the root of misery. To the Indian it has always seemed self-evident that suffering is essentially evil and that a real salvation must cut at the root of all that contributes to suffering. This is an intelligible position, and to a certain extent we should probably all agree with it. Suffering, at any rate in many of its forms, is certainly evil. Where Christian thought diverges from Indian thought on this subject is in this, that suffering has never been

recognized as the sole or most fundamental evil. There have always been recognized evils greater than suffering, and goods greater than freedom from suffering. It is noteworthy that Gautama never questioned the assumption that here lay the essential evil that beset existence. He had learned it from his childhood, and all that he saw seemed to impress the truth of it more deeply on his mind. Again, it is of interest to observe the place occupied in his thought by the traditional ideas of *karma* and *saṁsāra*. No attempt is made to prove their truth; they are simply taken for granted. There could be no clearer demonstration than this of the extraordinary hold which these ideas had taken on the Indian mind. In the form in which they have been held in India they are so foreign to the average Western mind that it is difficult for most European readers to enter into sympathetic understanding of the type of mind to which they are incontestably true. The Buddha discarded much which belonged to the current religion, but the conceptions of *karma* and *saṁsāra* remained above doubt.

The particular way in which *karma* operates was, however, understood by him as different in certain important respects from the way in which the thinkers of the Upanishads understood it. The Buddha had no place in his thought for either a Universal Soul or an individual soul. His mind was of the rationalistic type, and he had no need for such entities. There is in the individual being no essential permanent element—no kernel which remains when the husk has been removed; there is nothing but husk. Nor is there any kernel hidden away behind the phenomena of the world. Following the teaching of Gautama himself, early Buddhism developed a very elaborate psychology in which were catalogued the various qualities or properties which enter into the constitution of man. He *is* the aggregate of these properties, physical and psychical, and there is nothing behind them which may be called soul. The belief in a soul is one of the heresies which Buddhism has condemned. This doctrine of the non-existence of soul has

been illustrated in an interesting way in the *Milindapañha* [1] in a passage in which man is likened to a chariot. The chariot is not the ornamented cover, or the wheels, or the spokes, or the reins, or all the parts thrown together. But all the parts combined together in their proper order are the chariot. So a living being is the various divisions of qualities, physical and psychical, *skandhas* as they are called, united together. How then can the individual be determined to one new birth after another according to his *karma*? Where is the subject of *karma*? With the dissolution of the body, does some part remain which bears the *karma* acquired in one life into another life? No, it is said, nothing is passed on but the *karma* itself. The 'thirst' or 'grasping' which characterized the sentient being who has died leads to a re-combination of qualities so as to form another sentient being determined as to its nature by this *karma*. When the Buddha was asked whether this did not mean that it was really a new being who was born, and who had to bear the consequences of the actions of the being who had died, he treated the question as irrelevant and unprofitable and would give no answer.

This is one important aspect of the Buddhist doctrine of *karma*, but there is another aspect of it which is even more important. It has already been indicated that Gautama placed less emphasis on the magical and ritualistic elements in the religion in which he had been nurtured than on the more ethical implications of *karma* as he understood it. The significance of this can hardly be exaggerated. In the history of Hinduism from its beginnings in the Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads the ethical has always been more or less obscured and distorted by unethical conceptions and practices. *Karma* has never been thoroughly ethicized. Merit has been supposed to be acquired through the performance of sacrifices and ritual acts which have had no ethical value. In the teaching of the Buddha all this was modified. *Karma* was largely ethicized. The only acts which were regarded as meritorious were moral

[1] Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 129 ff.

acts, and belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies was condemned as heresy. At the same time it must not be imagined that this means that *karma* was explained as deriving its content from moral actions bearing values identical with what they would bear in the estimation of the modern European. We must bear in mind the fact that Gautama started from presuppositions which are strange to us. He held that the essential evil is individual existence with the thirst that serves to maintain it, and the suffering which is its inevitable outcome. The end he held to be the destruction of that thirst and the consequent cutting of the root of individual existence. The virtues which will contribute to the attainment of such an end are not qualities like valour and high-mindedness, but those qualities which help the mind to withdraw itself from its attachment to the worldly things and interests which enslave it. In the light of this we can understand the Ten Moral Rules binding on members of the order of mendicants which the Buddha formed—not to destroy life, not to take that which is not given, not to tell lies, not to drink intoxicants, not to commit adultery, not to eat unseasonable food at night, not to wear garlands or use perfumes, to sleep on a mat spread on the ground, to abstain from dancing, music and stage plays, and to abstain from the use of gold and silver. These injunctions are the outcome not of any idea of occult or magical influences connected with the actions themselves but of a realization of their importance in relation to the highest good.

At the same time we must remember that the Buddha did not teach a doctrine that provided a way of deliverance merely to the individual. As has been already said, in his own great spiritual struggle he was deeply moved by the thought of the needs of others. As a consequence the virtue of love is given a prominent place in his ethical teaching,[1]

[1] The following statement is not necessarily in contradiction to this, any more than in Butler's identification of virtue with the dictates of self-love :— 'Self-love, self-love well understood, governs all the actions of a Buddhist, whether monk or layman.' Poussin, *The Way to Nirvāṇa*, p. 75.

and by love he means not the passion which disturbs and enslaves the mind, but that calm and unperturbed frame of mind that would seek the good even of the evil-doer, refusing to return hatred by hatred.

> For never in this world does hatred cease by hatred;
> Hatred ceases by love; this is always its nature.

This love was extended not only to human beings but to the lower animals, towards which the duty of harmlessness, or *ahiṁsā*, is enjoined. To this we shall return when we come to examine the similar doctrine in Jainism.

With the recognition of the virtue of love a place is provided far more logically in Buddhism than in the doctrines of orthodox Hindu teachers for social life. The qualities which are developed and exercised in social life at its best are not so alien to the spirit of him who treads the Noble Path as they are to the spirit of the man who seeks deliverance in accordance with the precepts of the Upanishads. The gulf between ordinary life in society and the life of the *sannyāsī* is far more marked than that which exists between ordinary life and that of the Buddhist mendicant. And what gulf there was the Buddha helped to bridge by his institution of an order of lay disciples, in which a place was found for those of his followers who were not prepared to take upon themselves all the responsibilities involved in membership of the mendicant order. An interesting example of his attitude to the duties of social life, to quote but one out of many, is furnished by the precepts which he gave to a householder named Sigāla who came and did him reverence. He laid down to him the mutual duties of parents and children, pupils and teachers, husband and wife, friends and companions, masters and servants, and laymen and those devoted to religion. And he recognized in all these relationships those gentler virtues which contribute to the smooth functioning of the social organism.

This is one of the great contributions which Buddhism has made to Indian ethical thought. Of equal importance is its

teaching regarding caste. Gautama made no religious distinction between men of different castes, but associated with men of all castes and threw his order open to all except outcastes. In his wanderings he received food indifferently from people of all castes. He accepted men as members of his order according to their personal fitness only, and one of his earliest disciples was a barber named Upāli, a man of great gifts, destined to become a leader in the order. It was, no doubt, this disregard of caste, the most firmly established institution in the Hindu social system, which chiefly prevented Buddhism from becoming the religion of India, and which led in the end to its overthrow; for among his lay followers caste persisted. But it was an element for which the Buddha could logically find no place in his system; which, indeed, was utterly inconsistent with some of its central principles. In Hindu literature distinctions of caste have been explained by reference to the principle of *karma*, but to Gautama there was no necessary connexion between them. He realized that a man's position was determined by his *karma*, but that did not involve the institution of fixed and unalterable social divisions. To man as man he preached a message of boundless hope.

II

It used to be popularly believed that the Jains were simply a sect of Buddhists, but for many years now it has been clearly established that they are a religious community with a distinct origin and history. The founder of the sect is believed to have been Mahāvīra, probably a contemporary of the Buddha, and belonging to the same social class. Comparatively little is known of his life. The title of Jina which was bestowed on him is a title corresponding to that of Buddha; it means the Conqueror, and it was adopted by him when he attained enlightenment, completely destroying *karma*, becoming 'Conqueror of the Eight Karma'.[1]

[1] Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism*, p. 39.

Jainism stands much nearer to Hinduism in certain of its features than does Buddhism, holding to the existence of the soul, the efficacy of *tapas*, &c. There are, however, in Jain teaching, features suggestive of Buddhism. Like the Buddha, the Jina held that the *summum bonum* is the destruction of *karma*, whereby freedom is attained from the bonds of individual existence. But it has been held that the Jain conception of Nirvāṇa is considerably different from the Buddhist. The Jain conception has more positive content. Barth[1] says:

> It is not the fact of existence which is the evil in the eyes of the Jains; it is life which is bad; and Nirvāṇa is with them, not the annihilation of the soul, but rather its deliverance and its entry into a blessedness that has no end.

Mrs. Stevenson[2] quotes a śloka which describes the qualities of a Siddha (one who has attained deliverance):

> Omniscience, boundless vision, illimitable righteousness, infinite strength, perfect bliss, indestructibility, existence without form, a body that is neither light nor heavy, such are the characteristics of the Siddha.

The way to the attainment of this end is marked out with great detail. There are various stages through which the lay seeker has to pass before he is fitted for the ascetic life, and then he has to pass through various other stages before he reaches the final goal. In all this moral conduct plays a more important part than in any of the other religious movements that come under our consideration, except Buddhism. A high place is given to the Triratna, or Three Jewels. These are perfect faith, perfect knowledge, and perfect conduct, and it is taught that, without the last, the first two are worthless. It is the attainment of this perfect conduct that is in view in the vows that seekers take upon themselves. The vows taken by the laymen are twelve, and all of them might be shown to have definite ethical bearings though largely of a negative kind. Those taken by the ascetic are five, viz. (1) *ahiṁsā*, avoidance of doing injury to life, (2) kindness and truthful

[1] Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 147. [2] *The Heart of Jainism*, p. 192.

speech, (3) not taking what is not given, (4) chastity, (5) renouncing all delusive interest in what does not exist.

The principle of *ahiṁsā* was and is interpreted by the Jains in a far more rigorous way than by the Buddhists. The Buddhists did not absolutely forbid the slaying of animals, and Gautama himself died of a disease caused by eating pork. Jainism, on the other hand, condemns the taking of life in any form. The *Yoga-śāstra* violently condemns the practice of animal sacrifice. And the true Jain takes the most elaborate precautions to prevent him from inadvertently destroying life. Monks are bound by a vow prohibiting them from killing any creature possessed of a single sense, while laymen must kill no creature possessed of two senses. It is believed that among the beings possessed of one sense, that of touch, are included, for example, clods of earth, water, air, fire. These may be inhabited by *jīvas*. In order that he may not injure life in these forms, the Jain monk sweeps the ground before him, breathes through a cloth, and strains his water. All this was prescribed only for monks, but later the effects of the discipline were extended, and laymen go to very great lengths in the precautions which they take against causing the deaths of animals, and in their positive efforts to preserve life. The Pinjra Pols, or hospitals for animals, of modern times in Western India are an interesting practical outcome of the doctrine. It is unfortunate that so much zeal for the preservation of life is not accompanied by more discretion in its exercise, and that it extends only to the preservation of life, taking no account of the quality of life which is preserved.

As a motive to the observance of *ahiṁsā* it is taught that the suffering which one inflicts on other living creatures will be punished by the infliction of the same suffering on one's self. In their explanation of the method by which *karma* operates, the Jains, equally with orthodox thinkers, hold to belief in both transmigration and hell. But the significance of the punishments of hell is more strongly emphasized. Between successive births the individual pays the penalty of his misdeeds in hell.

One exception to this wholesale condemnation of the taking of life is found in the permission which is accorded to those who have practised asceticism for twelve years to commit suicide. As in Hinduism, suicide is regarded as a sin, but provision is made for a sort of religious suicide that is not only not a crime but that is in the highest degree meritorious. It is permitted only to those who through the austerities which they have practised have assured their attainment of Nirvāṇa, and to those who are unable to restrain their passions.

It is fitting that at this point some further consideration should be given to the development of *ahiṁsā*. The doctrine, as we have seen, is not new in Jainism and Buddhism, but in them it has been considerably developed. In the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* it is mentioned along with asceticism, liberality, right dealing, and truthfulness as one of the gifts bestowed upon the priests in life, which is allegorized as a sacrifice. But throughout the Upanishads generally there is little mention of the doctrine, though it is the first of the five laws of Hindu ascetic life. In Vedic times flesh was eaten and animal sacrifices were offered; indeed, it is probable that in early times human sacrifice was practised. The tendency seems to have appeared in the times of the Brāhmaṇas to substitute for the animal victim a figure of it made of flour. In Buddhism and Jainism we see a further development of the doctrine. We have seen how in Jainism a peculiar doctrine regarding life led to an extraordinarily rigorous application of the doctrine of *ahiṁsā*. In all its rigorousness it could not be applied to the laity, for they had to provide the ascetics with food, and for that purpose the destruction of life was necessary. But the spirit of the doctrine led in course of time to abstention on the part of the laity from the slaying of animals, and later from the eating of flesh. A similar movement took place in Buddhism.

The root idea in the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* has already been discussed (Chapter III). It is the awe with which the savage regards life in all its forms. But we are still left with the

problem why in India this developed into the elaborate system of restrictions which came to be observed in later times. Writing of the early stages of this development in the Brāhmaṇas, Hopkins expresses the opinion that the new attitude to animals began as a purely sumptuary measure.[1] He cannot believe that in the tendency to substitute animal for vegetable sacrifices there is any new respect for or kindness to animals manifested; still less that it had any connexion with the doctrine of *saṁsāra* which had as yet been but imperfectly developed. But it is hard to see how out of the prohibition of the sacrifice of animals useful to man there could have developed that abhorrence of the killing of animals of all kinds which was developed in the minds of the people. We may admit that the sanctity with which the cow came to be endowed was the outcome of the very great economic value which it possessed, but this does not help us far on to a solution of the general problem.

There can be little doubt that the development of the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* was greatly influenced by the operation of those ideas out of which the doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsāra* grew. Or perhaps more truly these doctrines have common roots, and in their growth acted and reacted upon each other. They sprang alike from that primitive awe in the presence of life, to which reference has already been made, and from that feeling of kinship which primitive man has with lower beings. With the reinforcement which this feeling received in the Jain and Buddhist formulations of the doctrines of *saṁsāra* and *karma*, we do not wonder that in course of time men came to regard with stronger feelings of revulsion the eating of the flesh of animals. We cannot tell why among the Buddhists and Jains certain ideas became so determinative, but we can trace the logical working of some ideas once they had been accepted. And we can understand how it was that a doctrine, which in the beginning had nothing to do with eating, came to have the appearance to the ordinary mind of having this as its special reference.

[1] Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 200.

Belief in transmigration received tremendous reinforcement through its association with the doctrine of *karma*. Vague beliefs in the possibility of re-incarnation in the bodies of animals lost their vagueness and became definite and reasonable. With the idea of merit as an inalienable possession of each individual the belief became perfectly natural that according to its merit the soul should find a new body. These beliefs were firmly held at the time of the appearance of Mahāvīra and Gautama, and we can easily understand that they would in turn make possible a much fuller and more definite doctrine regarding the duty of man to the lower animals than had been recognized before.

It must not be supposed that the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* involves simply the duty of abstaining from injury to the lower animals. The term became firmly established in the language of Indian religion, but it has been interpreted differently at different times. With the Buddhists it involved a genuine sympathy with and tenderness towards all kinds of living creatures. With the Jains, on the other hand, the main principle was that of refraining from the destruction of life, and modern Jains at any rate observe this duty by practices which often achieve the end of preserving life at the cost of very great suffering to the animal so preserved. And in Hinduism there has been the same tendency to value the mere preservation of life apart from the worth of the life which is preserved.

We have dealt at this stage with questions connected with *ahiṁsā* which carry us beyond the Jain doctrine because of the important place which the doctrine occupies in later Hindu ethics. The other aspects of Jain morality call for little further notice here. Regarding the attitude of the Jains to austerity or self-torture, however, a word must be said. Here we have one of the most marked points of difference between Jain and Buddhist morality. From the beginning ascetic practices were given an important place. The two great sub-sects, the Digambaras (those clothed in air), so called because they wore no clothes, and the Śvetāmbaras (those clothed in

white) belong to very early times. The former sect in particular gave itself to ascetic practices, but such practices were part of the discipline of the monastic life through which lay the way to Nirvāṇa. It was better to commit suicide than to fail to practise austerities.

III

The third movement of which we are to take notice here has nothing in common with the other two except that they are all alike heretical. Buddhism and Jainism departed from the doctrine of the infallibility of the Veda, and on the basis of certain principles which were common to Indian thought erected structures of their own. The Chārvākas, on the other hand, departed from the ground principles not only of Hindu thought but of all thought that makes religion possible. Our information regarding them is very scanty, and what we have is derived chiefly from an account given of them in the *Sarva Darśana Saṁgraha*, and from references to them in various other works, for example in the *Bhagavadgītā*. They were given the name Chārvākas from the name of the supposed founder of the sect, Chārvāka. They were also known as Lokāyatas, secularists or materialists. They held that the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, were the original principles of all things, and that intelligence was produced from them in the same way as the intoxicating power of liquors was produced by the mixing of certain ingredients. According to this theory the soul is nothing apart from the body, its relation to which may be regarded as that of an epiphenomenon. Sense perception is the only source of knowledge, and the only good for man is that enjoyment which the senses are capable of giving. No doubt all pleasure is mixed with pain, but that does not affect the truth that pleasure is the only good. Our business is, as far as possible, to avoid the pain which accompanies pleasure, just as a man in eating fish takes the flesh and avoids the scales and the bones.

The Chārvākas pour scorn on orthodox religion. The

Vedas, they say, are the inventions of rogues, and are tainted by untruth, self-contradiction, and tautology; the sacrifices were instituted by priests as a means of livelihood; and the teachings of the paṇḍits are inconsistent with each other. There is no Supreme God, no hell, and no deliverance in the sense in which it is believed in by the orthodox. The gist of the practical teaching of the Chārvākas, with its many similarities to Cyrenaic doctrine, is given in a passage quoted in the *Sarva Darśana Saṁgraha*, and we transcribe it here.

There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world,
Nor do the actions of the four castes, orders, &c., produce any rea effect.
The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic's three staves, and smearing one's self with ashes,
Were made by Nature as the livelihood of those destitute of knowledge and manliness.
If a beast slain in the Jyotishṭoma rite will itself go to heaven,
Why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father?
If the Śrāddha produces gratification to beings who are dead,
Then here, too, in the case of travellers when they start, it is needless to give provisions for the journey.
If beings in heaven are gratified by our offering the Śrādda here,
Then why not give the food down below to those who are standing on the house-top?
While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs into debt;
When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again?
If he who departs from the body goes to another world,
How is it that he comes not back again, restless for love of his kindred?
Hence it is only as a means of livelihood that Brahmans have established here
All these ceremonies for the dead,—there is no other fruit anywhere.
The three authors of the Vedas were buffoons, knaves, and demons.
All the well-known formulae of the paṇḍits, jarpharī, turpharī, &c.
And all the obscene rites for the queen commanded in the Aśvamedha,
These were invented by buffoons, and so all the various kinds of presents to the priests,
While the eating of flesh was similarly commanded by the night-prowling demons.

[1] Cowell and Gough, *Sarva Darśana Saṁgraha*, p. 10.

This doctrine has exercised but little influence on the main currents of Hindu thought; and we mention it only to show that India, like other lands, has produced some thinkers who have not hesitated to declare themselves to be egoistic hedonists. It is doubtless this school which is condemned in such extreme terms in the *Bhagavadgītā*:

> Perverted in spirit, mean of understanding, cruel in works, they that uphold this creed arise as foes for the destruction of the world.[1]

[1] *Bhagavadgītā*, xvi. 7 ff.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW ETHIC OF THE *BHAGAVADGĪTĀ*

WE have noted how in the *Ṛig Veda* there were to be seen what might have been the beginnings of a truly ethical religion, had not the stream of religious thought been diverted into other channels. In later literature we have seen an almost complete severance of morality from religion. This severance was not absolute, for we have seen in our study of the Upanishads how much of their ethical teaching was the outcome of their peculiar metaphysical and theological position, and down through the history of early Indian thought ethical doctrine was influenced in various ways by religious and philosophical conceptions. But the prevailingly pantheistic philosophy which had become dominant in India had little place in it for morality in the usual sense of the term. In the highest flights of religion morality was simply transcended. Moral as well as other distinctions were resolved in that experience in which the individual soul realized its unity with the Supreme Soul.

Hinduism, however, has always been mindful of the needs of all who have belonged to its fold, and also of the needs of the various sides of human nature, and it has not failed to provide practical guidance to man. In the Law Books we have teaching regarding practical life in all the varied relationships into which men enter, and in all the various stages of its development. It is not the business of the expounders of the Law to deal with ultimate questions, and, as we have seen, they contradict themselves or one another when they attempt to estimate the relative values of different expressions of human activity. So, though the legal literature is in one sense our

most important source of information regarding Hindu ethics, it is so chiefly indirectly as furnishing us with knowledge of the forms of conduct actually practised. For it is important to observe that the duties inculcated in the Law Books have but a remote connexion with the true end of one's being. In the various lines that philosophical speculation has taken, the thought has remained constant that man's true being is not realized in worldly activity, that man, in so far as he is absorbed in finite experience of any kind, is missing his true vocation, is deluded and ensnared, and that his true goal lies in deliverance from the bonds of finite existence and realization of his identity with the Absolute. Accordingly, the ethical belongs to a sphere essentially distinct from that in which man's true end is attained. It has its value for men at a certain stage of development, but the tendency is to hold that when one attains to the higher the ethical is simply negated—one rises above good and evil. So in the Law Books while the details of the moral life are expounded, the significance of the moral life in itself is left in obscurity. The various details of good conduct are laid down with great exactness, but one is left wondering what is the meaning of the whole. Religious sanctions, no doubt, are offered for moral actions, but this fact only serves to bring into clearer light the essential unsatisfactoriness of a religious position which admits of two standards not simply related to each other as higher to lower, but implicitly contradicting each other.

To the Western student such a way of regarding the ethical seems thoroughly unsatisfactory. To use a phrase of the late Professor James, the moral struggle '*feels* like a real fight'. If there be experiences of a higher order than the ethical, they transcend the ethical not by way of simple negation but by way of fulfilment. There must have been thinkers from an early date in India who felt that in ethical experience they were more closely in touch with reality than a logical interpretation of much of the teaching of the philosophers would admit. Even in the Upanishads the validity of moral

distinctions is frequently emphasized. But, at the best, good deeds only help the soul on towards a state of being from which the attainment of emancipation becomes easier. They contribute to the acquisition of merit, but in no way to the breaking of the wheel of *karma*, which is the true goal. That is to say, morality is, strictly speaking, non-essential to emancipation; in the highest religious experience it has no place.

The tendency to take morality more seriously expressed itself perhaps earliest and most definitely in the *Bhagavadgītā*. This is a work the origin of which remains to this day known with but little certainty. It has come down to us as an interpolation in the great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata*, where it is set forth as a conversation which took place between Arjuna and Kṛishṇa on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Kṛishṇa was acting as Arjuna's charioteer, and before engaging in battle the latter paused, appalled by the prospect of slaughter, and put to Kṛishṇa the question whether it was right to engage in the slaughter of his fellow-men.

Many questions have been raised regarding the origin of the work, and to most of these no certain answer has as yet been returned; but Professor Garbe has made some suggestions, which the latest scholarship has rejected, but which have this great value that they have served to bring into clear light the lines of contradiction running through the work. Put very briefly Garbe's position is that the *Bhagavadgītā* in the form in which we now have it is a composite production. The original work which was composed possibly in the second century B.C., and which represented the faith of the Bhāgavatas, modified by the introduction of elements from the Sāṁkhya-Yoga, was overlaid, probably in the second century A.D. by Vedantic doctrine, the result being that in the work as we now have it there is an irreconcilable confusion of theistic and pantheistic ideas. He thinks it is quite easy to separate the later additions from the original work, in which we have Bhāgavata doctrine presented from the author's peculiar point

of view. If Garbe's theory be sound, then the thought of the *Bhagavadgītā* becomes comparatively consistent and intelligible. If it be unsound, he has at least done us this service that far more thoroughly than any preceding writer he has analysed the work for us in such a way as to make clear to us the diverse elements which in it have been confused together, so that we can study them in isolation as actual tendencies of thought. We need not accordingly commit ourselves to any judgement as to the merits of the case, not even to an expression of opinion regarding the prior question of the compositeness of the work, a question raised by other writers before Garbe. The glaring inconsistencies which it contains seem to be best explained on the hypothesis that it is composite, but if the truth be otherwise we should still have to say that the author had a definite and intelligible doctrine, in his exposition of which he was hampered by the fact that he had failed to free his mind from the influence of the teaching of another and contradictory philosophy. It is from this point of view, at any rate, that we propose to examine the ethical teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*, taking its essential teaching as representing, in the words of Garbe, 'a Krishnaism based on the Sāṁkhya-Yoga philosophy.'

The religious foundation of the thought of the *Bhagavadgītā* is supplied by the faith of the Bhāgavatas. Many questions to which no certain answer can be given have been raised in regard to the origin and early history of this movement, but Sir R. G. Bhandarkar and other scholars have believed that it is to be traced back to Kṛishṇa Vāsudeva, who is represented in the older parts of the *Mahābhārata* as a heroic warrior. He worshipped the Bhagavān or the Adorable, and his followers were accordingly called the Bhāgavatas, 'Worshippers of the Adorable'. This religion spread, and in course of time Vāsudeva himself came to be identified with Bhagavān. The sources of this religion, which came to exercise so wide and profound an influence, is a subject for inquiry which concerns the student of the history of religion. What is of

importance for us here is the fact that it was a religion which tended to be definitely monotheistic, and that the One Supreme God was conceived as a God of grace, in fellowship with whom men found the true end of their being.

In the *Bhagavadgītā* we see this monotheistic religion in alliance with the Sāṁkhya and Yoga philosophies. These systems will be discussed in a later chapter, to which the reader is referred. At the time of the writing of the *Bhagavadgītā* they had not reached their final form, but the main ideas which enter into them had been formulated by schools of thinkers, the predecessors of those who in later times gave to the systems the form in which they have become familiar to us. It will be sufficient at this stage to draw attention to one or two of the outstanding features of these philosophies. The Sāṁkhya is a dualistic philosophy. It assumes the existence of two ultimate realities, *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*, from the union of which phenomenal existence takes its rise. *Prakṛiti*, the material cause of the universe, is lifeless and dark, till vivified and illuminated by *Purusha*, the efficient cause. The actual forms which existence takes are determined by the three *Guṇas*, cords or constituent elements, qualities or moods, which belong to *Prakṛiti*. These are *Sattva*, or the goodness mood, *Rajas*, or the passion mood, and *Tamas*, or the darkness mood, all of which enter in varying proportions into all phenomenal existence. So far as conscious individual existence is concerned, it is the dominance of the moods which determines its continuance, and deliverance from individual existence with all the evils which it involves can be attained only when the domination of the moods is broken by that act of discrimination, *viveka*, in which *Prakṛiti* and *Purusha* are discriminated, and the phenomenal, now understood, is transcended.

The Yoga is less a system of thought than a system of practice. As a philosophy, it is but a modification of the Sāṁkhya, the main conceptions of which are accepted. The one important difference in their intellectual position is that

the Yoga holds to the existence of a Lord, *Īśvara*, for whom there is no place in strict Sāṁkhyan thought. There is no serious contradiction between the two systems. The goal is understood by the Yoga as it is by the Sāṁkhya, but the Yoga prescribes practices the object of which is to bring the self into its essential form; but these exercises would seem to be regarded in the most typical expressions of Yoga thought as rather aids to *viveka* than as substitutes for it. This is the position, at any rate, of the author of the *Bhagavadgītā*. He says:

> The simple speak of the School of the Count, Sāṁkhya, and the School of the Rule, Yoga, as diverse, but not so the learned.[1]

It is remarkable that we should find in combination these various lines of thought which meet in the *Bhagavadgītā*, in particular that the Sāṁkhya-Yoga should be pressed into the service of a religious movement with which it might have well been supposed to have little in common. We are far from knowing all the conditions that determined the union, but we are less concerned with these than with the fruit which sprang from it in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

While we are impressed by certain features in the work that strike one as almost marking a revolution in thought, it is well that we should recognize the strongly conservative character which, in certain respects, it maintains. Various scholars[2] have pointed out that much of the influence which it had and still has over the minds of men is to be accounted for by the fact that the new has been brought into line with the old. It has been said that it was one of the characteristics of the Western part of what is known as the Outland that it was less radical in its speculation than the Eastern part, the Magadha country, where the Buddhist and Jain heresies were born. At any rate there are conservative elements in the poem which colour it to a considerable degree. The Upanishads are still given their place of authority, many passages being quoted directly

[1] v. 4. [2] See e.g. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, &c.*, p. 9.

from them. The truth of the conceptions of *karma* and *saṁsāra* remains unquestioned. The validity of the established social order is maintained. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar even maintains that the doctrine of *bhakti* was not entirely new, holding that the germs of it are to be seen in the Upanishads.[1]

But we are concerned here less with these more general questions than with the important ethical aspects of the teaching of the book. Let it be remembered that the discussion which forms its content arose out of a question relating to moral conduct. Arjuna was faced by what seemed to be a conflict of duties. On the one hand there was the duty imposed upon him as a warrior of fighting; on the other hand there was the duty of maintaining the established social order, a duty which he seemed to be in danger of transgressing by slaying men, incurring 'the guilt of destroying a stock'. The way in which he regards this sin is very interesting.

> In the destruction of a stock perish the ancient Laws of the stock; when Law perishes, Lawlessness falls upon the whole stock.
>
> When Lawlessness comes upon it, O Kṛishṇa, the women of the stock fall to sin; and from the women's sinning, O thou of Vṛishṇi's race, castes become confounded.
>
> Confounding of caste brings to hell alike the stock-slayers and the stock; for their Fathers fall when the offerings of the cake and the water to them fail.
>
> By this guilt of the destroyers of a stock, which makes castes to be confounded, the everlasting Laws of race and Laws of stock are overthrown.
>
> For men the Laws of whose stock are overthrown, O Troubler of the Folk, a dwelling is ordained in hell; thus have we heard.[2]

Kṛishṇa does not accept this view, but, as we shall see, his reply to Arjuna implies an equally full acceptance of the importance of the social organization. That is to say no question is raised as to the validity of *dharma*. This is assumed. The question discussed concerns its practical application, and the

[1] *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, &c.*, p. 28.

[2] i. 40–44 (Barnett's Trans.).

outcome is that *dharma* itself is given a meaning in some respects new and deeper.

The essential idea in the reply which Kṛishṇa offered to Arjuna was that through the discharge of the duties of one's station without thought of fruit one was on the way to salvation. In places it is laid down in more strict Sāṁkhyan fashion that salvation is the outcome of that intellectual intuition by which one discriminates *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*. Strict Sāṁkhyan doctrine involves an ethic as other-worldly as anything which is to be found in the Upanishads, and the author does not deny that salvation may be found in this way. He makes statements as to the efficacy of knowledge as definite as this:

> He who knows thus the Male and Nature with the Moods, however he may be placed, never again comes to birth.[1]

But the author of the *Bhagavadgītā* seeks to show that there is a better way. The Sāṁkhya teaches that works are essentially evil, and are to be renounced. But this utter worklessness is unattainable, and the evil which has been supposed to cling to all works belongs in reality not to works in themselves, but to the longing which men have for the fruits of works. If that attachment to the fruits of works be destroyed, then there can be attained all that is supposed to follow from the relinquishment of all work.

> He who beholds in work No-Work, and in No-Work work, he is the man of understanding among mortals; he is in the Rule, a doer of perfect work.[2]

In one important aspect this idea is by no means new. Passages have been already quoted from the Upanishads in which it is maintained that it is possible for the individual to attain a state of mind in which works no longer leave their mark on him who does them. Among the most notable are such passages as the following:

> As water does not cling to a lotus leaf, so no evil deed clings to one who knows it.[3]

[1] xiii. 23. [2] iv. 18. [3] *Chhānd. U.* iv. 14. 3.

And

> And he who knows me thus, by no deed of his is his life harmed, not by the murder of his mother, not by the murder of his father, not by theft, not by the killing of a Brāhman. If he is going to commit a sin, the bloom does not depart from his face.[1]

But there are very vital differences between these points of view. In the Upanishads we have certain characteristics of the state of him who has reached the goal described; in the *Bhagavadgītā* this indifference to works is represented as a means to the attainment of the end. Also, whether justifiably or unjustifiably, the *Bhagavadgītā* elsewhere teaches that it is only works which are in accordance with *dharma*, the performance of which without attachment may be undertaken without sin. There can be no doubt that we have here a conception which marks a great advance in ethical doctrine. The noblest morality has perhaps always been the outcome of this spirit of absolute devotion to the dictates of duty, men following right because it is right 'in scorn of consequence'. But the difficulty which we feel in the case before us is that no principle is provided by which the content of 'right' may be discovered. For the content of morality we are pointed to *dharma*. If we ask why we should follow this strange amalgam of ethical, social, and ritual principles, no answer seems to be given. The author's case for orthodoxy explains his position, but does not justify it. Why may not a man without attachment practise other forms of conduct? No reason is given. We have simply the dogmatic statement:

> There is more happiness in doing one's own Law without excellence than in doing another's Law well. It is happier to die in one's own Law; another's Law brings dread.[2]

So if the law as conceived in the *Bhagavadgītā* has the same stringency as Kant's categorical imperative, it has at the same time a content determined in a way that is even more

[1] *Kaush. U.* iii. 3. 1. [2] iii. 35.

unsatisfactory. It may be that in making this criticism we seem to be demanding too much of a work which was not written with a view to the scientific exposition of doctrine, but which was intended rather to furnish guidance for practical life. It naturally did not deal with problems which had never been raised; and the validity of *dharma* was unquestioned. But still its uncritical attitude to *dharma* must impair its value for the modern reader. We must not on that account, however, close our eyes to the great advance that is marked by the conception of a moral imperative to which obedience is demanded for its own sake.

This attitude to *dharma* involves an attitude to the Vedic conception of the efficacy of works, different from that which we find in earlier works. The belief was generally held that through the performance of ritual and of good deeds merit was acquired which led to certain kinds of rewards. We have seen in some of the Upanishads the operation of the double standard thus set up—works leading to a finite reward, knowledge of the identity of the self with Brahman, on the other hand, leading to that deliverance from the bonds of individuality which was regarded as the *summum bonum.* The practice of the lower, however, was supposed to be of value as a preparation for the attainment of the highest. In the *Bhagavadgītā,* on the other hand, this lower level of moral endeavour is condemned. Kṛishṇa speaks with contempt of those

> who hold fast to the words of the Veda, and say 'there is naught else,'
>
> whose spirit is all lust, whose supreme end is Paradise,—(speech) appointing births as meed of Works, and dwelling much on various rites for reaching pleasure and empire—
>
> that (speech) steals away the wit of such lusters after pleasure and empire, and their understanding, being not sure, cannot be brought to concent.[1]

Man attains his true end only when he ceases to be moved by hope of such reward.

[1] ii. 42.

For under the Rule of the Understanding, prudent men regard not fruits of Works, and loose themselves from the bond of Birth, and go to a land where no sickness is.[1]

At the same time, it must be noted that the observance of Vedic rites is condemned not on the ground that they are ineffective but on the ground that the reward to which they lead is one which is of no value.

Men of the Threefold Lore that drink the *soma* and are cleansed of sin, worshipping me with sacrifices, pray for the way to paradise; winning as meed of righteousness the world of the Lord of Gods, they taste in heaven the heavenly delights of the gods.

When they have enjoyed that wide world of paradise and their wage of righteousness is spent, they enter into the world of mortals; thus the lovers of loves who follow the Law of the Three Books win but a going and a coming.[2]

The man who fulfils his own *dharma* without thought of reward is the true Yogī, the true follower of the Karma Yoga. But the performance of works in this spirit represents but the first stage of Yoga, the performance of one's duties without attachment taking the place of the various exercises prescribed by the orthodox Yoga doctrine. That this workless performance of works is not by itself sufficient is due to the fact that man meets with obstacles in his pursuit of the highest good. His lower nature is a foe to be combated. The Fiery Mood asserts itself, expressing itself in love and wrath, which lead to the confusion of the Body's Tenant. On this account exercises leading to final deliverance are prescribed.

The Man of the Rule shall ever hold himself under the Rule, abiding alone in a secret place, utterly subdued in mind, without craving and without possessions.

On a pure spot he shall set for himself a firm seat, neither over-high nor over-low, and having over it a cloth, a deer's skin and *kuśa* grass.

On this couch he shall seat himself with thought intent, and the workings of mind and sense-instruments restrained, and shall for purification of spirit labour on the Rule.

Firm, holding body, head, and neck in unmoving equipoise, gazing on the end of his nose, and looking not round about him,

[1] ii. 51. [2] ix. 20.

Calm of spirit, void of fear, abiding under the vow of chastity, with mind restrained and thought set on Me, so shall he sit that is under the Rule, given over to Me.

In this wise holding himself ever under the Rule, the strict-minded Man of the Rule comes to the peace that ends in extinction and that abides with Me.[1]

Through such exercises he is enabled to rise beyond the Moods and to enter into that ideal state which is the goal of all endeavour. Even if deliverance be not attained as the immediate outcome of these Yogic exercises, at least the individual is put in a more favourable position for the attainment of deliverance in a future birth.

The Man of the Rule who labours stoutly, when cleansed of defilements and brought to adeptship through many births, goes thence by the Way Supreme.[2]

We have now been able to get a general view of the typical teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* as to the way to deliverance. It is the typical teaching, for there is recognized the other way—the way of Jñāna-Yoga, which is followed by the strict Sāṁkhyas. It too leads to the same goal, but it is precarious and difficult to follow. This on the other hand leads certainly to the goal and it is easy to follow.

But throughout this discussion we have left out of account one element of the highest importance. The Sāṁkhya has sometimes been stigmatized as an atheistic system, and not altogether unjustly. It is a dualistic system, the two terms of which are *Prakṛiti* and *Purusha*, and there is no recognition of any higher Unity in which the dualism is overcome. In the Yoga a place is found for God or Īśvara, but he is not the Supreme but an exalted particular soul. In the *Bhagavadgītā* God is recognized as 'the One without beginning, great lord of the worlds'. He is supreme over all, standing above both *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*, the creator and director of the Universe. Himself unfettered by *karma*, he controls the destinies of men, rewarding them according to their works.

[1] vi. 10. [2] vi. 45.

But by far the most significant element in the conception which is held of his nature is that of his love.

> Exceeding dear am I to the man of knowledge, and he to Me.[1]

- Accordingly he delivers from sin those who come to him.

> Surrendering all the Laws, come for refuge to Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sins; grieve not.[2]

Kṛishṇa is an incarnation of this Supreme God, one of the many incarnations which He has vouchsafed to the world.

> For whenever the Law fails and lawlessness uprises, O thou of Bharata's race, then do I bring myself to bodied birth.
>
> To guard the righteous, to destroy evil-doers, to establish the Law, I come into birth age after age.[3]

Now it is in the peculiar religious attitude which is enjoined towards the Lord that the special interest of the *Bhagavadgītā* lies. Through love to God the individual is led with certainty to deliverance. And it is important to observe that *bhakti* in itself is sufficient. Works are excluded as rigidly as they are in the Pauline theology, so far as they are claimed to be a ground of salvation. And the way of deliverance is accordingly open to all who belong to the four castes. There is in the declaration of a way of deliverance to all, qualified though it be in this way, the admission of a principle, of which previously there had been comparatively little trace. One passage is very striking:—

> Even though he should be a doer of exceeding evil that worships Me with undivided worship, he shall be esteemed good; for he is of right purpose.
>
> Speedily he becomes righteous of soul, and comes to lasting peace. O son of Kuntī, be assured that none who is devoted to Me is lost.
>
> For even they that be born of sin, O son of Pṛithā,—women, traffickers, and serfs,—if they turn to Me, come to the supreme path;
>
> how much more then shall righteous Brāhmans and devout kingly sages?[4]

The last part of the passage does not seriously detract from the value of the first part. There is involved in it nothing more than an admission of the fact that there were

[1] vii. 17. [2] xviii. 66. [3] iv. 7. [4] ix. 30ff.

some who had been placed in positions in the world which made the way easier for them than it was to others. What the Law was to the Jews, a *paidagogos* to bring them to Christ, that their position of special privilege was to those of the higher castes. It is to be noted also that the teaching of the passage, rightly understood, is not Antinomian in tendency. It is well to make this clear, because there is much religious literature in India of which the same cannot be said. In the *Bhagavadgītā bhakti* does not take the place of a righteous life, so that the religious man does not require to manifest his religion in a good life. The worship of the Blessed One does not express itself in mere ecstasy. In it the whole of one's being is engaged; 'He is of right purpose'. In this rightness of purpose there is the guarantee of righteousness in deed. There are no doubt indications of a tendency to exaggerate the significance of the more strictly ecstatic aspect of this loving devotion. Much importance is attached to the thoughts of the dying man, as when it is said:—

> He who at his last hour, when he casts off the body, goes hence remembering Me, goes assuredly into my being.
>
> Whatsoever being a man at his end in leaving the body remembers, to that same he always goes, O son of Kuntī, inspired to being therein.[1]

But even here it is clear that what is important is the direction given at the time of death to the whole soul.

We cannot fail to be struck in this part of our study with the similarity of the *bhakti* doctrine as expounded in the *Bhagavadgītā* with the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. The same problems arise as to the relation of faith to works, and the same danger besets the *bhakta* of falling into the Antinomian error of imagining that his faith or *bhakti* serves to lift him above moral distinctions. For this position there is no more ground in the *Gita* than there is in the Epistles of St. Paul. But it is a doctrine that is easy of misinterpretation, and which actually came to be misinterpreted by thinkers whose ethical sense was less sound than that of the author of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

[1] viii. 5 f.

We may now consider the question of the more strictly ethical outcome of the doctrine of the *Bhagavadgītā.* One important point has already been dealt with—the duty of performing one's *dharma* without thought of reward. In this we see morality taking to itself a content far more definitely positive than it has had in the other writings we have studied. The ordinary business of every day is given a meaning and a worth that it does not have even in the Law Books. But it is doubtful whether Kṛishṇa's teaching on this subject is quite satisfactory. The question has already been asked why one should follow one's *dharma. Dharma* does not seem to have any meaning in relation to the fundamental principles which are operative in the universe. It does not help us much to be told that it was created by the Supreme, or that for its maintenance He incarnates Himself from time to time, or that in His relations with the world He is free from attachment. Indeed these considerations serve to intensify the difficulty, for in the light of them it is difficult to see the meaning of the phenomenal at all. The wise man should do his appointed work, it is said, without regard to the fruit of works, in the same spirit as the Supreme performs His works. What does unattachment to the fruit of works here mean? In some places at any rate one is forced to the conclusion that it involves the idea, as an essential element in it, of absence of purpose. In the *Bhagavadgītā* we have a conception of the world different from that of the orthodox Sāṁkhya. Behind both *Prakṛiti* and *Purusha* there is the Supreme who is in some way expressed in both. So the phenomenal world is no longer the outcome of the mere lighting up of *Prakṛiti* by *Purusha*, but it is created and continued under the direction of the Supreme. We seem to be forced to the conclusion that God created the world, imposing laws upon nature and upon man, and yet that in all this He remained free from attachment, not loving His creation, not seeking the fulfilment of any purpose through it; but at the same time, man's *dharma*, established by the Supreme without attachment, is to be

performed by man with similar absence of attachment. The finite world, and *dharma* with it, thus lose all meaning. We have an implied distinction similar to that which Descartes drew in later times between the Will and the Understanding of God, and the primacy in this case as in the case of Descartes is assumed to belong to the former. God has willed things to be as they are. By the mere fiat of His will he might have made them otherwise. This is not a very satisfactory basis either for knowledge or for morality. So here, *dharma* is *dharma.* It is to be performed because God has ordained it, but beyond that no purpose is fulfilled by it. Let man resolutely perform it, regardless of its fruits.

In the light of this statement we can see that we cannot without some qualification say that morality receives in the *Bhagavadgītā* a positive content. It certainly does so, but it is a content cold and lifeless, fixed and immutable, not a content which becomes ever richer and more vital to him who seeks to perform it.

So, we do not wonder that, when the qualities which characterize the moral man are dealt with in detail, the emphasis is rather on those connected with absence of attachment than on those connected with the performance of positive duty. Take one passage in which there are detailed the qualities which fit a man for the course which leads to final redemption.

> Fearlessness, purity of the Goodness-Mood, abiding in knowledge and the Rule, almsgiving, restraint of sense, sacrifice, scripture-reading, mortification, uprightness,
>
> harmlessness, truth, wrathlessness, renunciation, restraint of spirit, lack of malice, pity towards born beings, unwantoning sense, tenderness, modesty, steadfastness,
>
> Heroic temper, patience, constancy, purity, innocence, and lack of overweening spirit are in him that is born to God's estate, O thou of Bharata's race.[1]

It will be observed that in such a passage as this it is the passive virtues that are most prominent. There are several positive virtues in the list, but it is worthy of note that, while in the case of passive virtues it is chiefly the inner atti-

[1] xvi. 1 ff.

tude that is emphasized, it is mainly overt actions that are mentioned when positive virtues are in question. For example, almsgiving, scripture-reading, and sacrifice are overt actions which are prescribed in the manuals of *dharma*. So is *ahiṁsā* or harmlessness. The most interesting of the positive virtues enjoined is that of heroic temper, energy, or vigour. It may be taken as marking a more positive way of regarding the character of the good man.

Another passage deals with the duties that are laid upon the members of the different castes.

> Restraint of spirit and sense, mortification, purity, patience, uprightness, knowledge, discernment, and belief are the natural works of the *Brāhman*.
>
> Valour, heroic temper, constancy, skill, steadfastness in strife, largesse, and princeliness are the natural knightly (*Kshatriya*) works.
>
> Tilling the ground, herding kine, and trading are the natural works of Traffickers (*Vaiśyas*); and the natural work of the Serf (*Sūdra*) is service.[1]

These works are natural because determined by the Moods. In the case of the two lowest castes reference is made simply to their peculiar worldly occupations, discharge of the duties of which is considered as the proper work of the caste, while the exercise of qualities more distinctively ethical is involved in the performance of the work of the two highest castes. But the striking thing is that recognition is given at all to those qualities of mind and heart which serve to fit a man for the discharge of the duties and responsibilities of his station. Not indeed that they should simply be recognized, for that is no new thing, but that it should be recognized that in the exercising of these qualities a man was not simply making good *karma*, but in a more direct way making for the attainment of the end of his being. For this is the most remarkable thing in the ethical teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* that for it there is no sharp division between the worldly life and the religious life.

> The common round, the daily task
> Should furnish all we ought to ask.

[1] xviii. 41–4.

It may be that it is at the expense of logic that qualities like valour and heroic temper are given a place here. They may not be consistent with that freedom from attachment to the fruit of works inculcated by the *Bhagavadgītā*. But after all it is not in the consistency of its thought that the value of the *Bhagavadgītā* lies. From the ethical point of view we are impressed most of all by the fact that, however hesitatingly, a pathway to reality was found in the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of life.

This interpretation may seem to be inconsistent with the main trend of the teaching of the book. It might be maintained with much show of reason that the worklessness referred to is not synonymous with absence of purpose, the Supreme in His works being devoid not of all purpose but only of that craving which seeks satisfaction in something that is to be gained through works; and that the individual in his works must remain unmoved only by selfish desire. But even so the difficulty is not removed. The Supreme finds satisfaction, it is said, in the devotion of his devotees. But if this be so, it would seem that in some way this purpose had to do with the institution of the conditions under which such devotion should be possible, and so with the *dharma* which He established as man's law. The difficulty would not be so acute if a distinction had been consistently maintained between the kinds of fruits which works produce. As it is, no such distinction is clearly drawn. The fruits of works are thought of as something irrelevant. Now as a matter of fact the consequences of any act are innumerable and of many kinds, and the moralist judges its worth as a moral act by reference to the motive from which it has sprung. That is to say, the question is, which of the many consequences of the act was that which the agent foresaw, and for the sake of the realization of which he performed the act? An act and its consequences cannot be isolated from each other, nor can it be judged apart from them. The value of the ethical teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* is impaired by failure to recognize this, at any

rate explicitly; and the injunction to perform works without attachment to their fruits amounts to a denial of the value of all acts performed with purpose—a position which it is of course impossible to maintain consistently.

If the reply be made that there is implicit in the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* that distinction which is found so widely in Hindu thought, between the finite fruit which works produce and that higher fruit which consists in deliverance, it might be admitted that this was no doubt in the writer's mind, but at the same time the question would have to be raised whether it had any logical justification. The tendency in Hindu thought has been to regard all finite goods as belonging to a different plane from the supreme good. One of the great merits of the *Bhagavadgītā* is that it brings the ideal into relation with the activities of ordinary life. But to do so effectively there must be recognition of the value of lower objects of desire, when sought not for their own sakes but in accordance with a principle by which all ideals of practice take their value from the relation in which they stand to the highest. Such a principle is lacking in the *Bhagavadgītā*. No examination of the end will furnish us with any clue to the details of duty, and the relation of *dharma* to the end is an external one.

While we offer these criticisms, we must not forget the immense influence which the *Bhagavadgītā* has exercised on the minds of the Hindu people both religiously and ethically. It is in connexion with the school of *bhakti*, of which this is the first great classic, that we find some of the highest manifestations of Hindu religion and morality. The conception of God as a personal being, gracious towards those who seek him, however inadequately and confusedly it may have been presented here, is one which has done much to enrich the moral life of many of those who have received it. As for the *Bhagavadgītā* itself, its ethical influence has been made manifest through particular lofty passages rather than through its doctrine as a whole.

CHAPTER IV

THE ETHICS OF THE SIX SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY

In the course of our study of the Upanishads it was indicated that there were to be found in them various philosophical theories. This point was not elaborated, as it was said that the ethical outcome of the different doctrines was to all intents and purposes the same. But in later times these theories came to be more sharply distinguished from each other, and the great orthodox systems of Indian Philosophy came to be recognized as such. There are many problems connected with their rise which we may pass over here. It is not necessary that we should study them in any detail at all as philosophical systems. But they have important bearings on ethical theory and practice, and it is desirable that from this point of view we should give them some attention. The ethical consequences of these systems have not been worked out as those of European systems have been, for there is a sense in which moral questions have but little interest or meaning for Indian philosophers. But any system of philosophy must have very important ethical bearings, and it is incumbent on us in a study of Hindu ethics to try to bring to light the peculiar relationships which exist between the great metaphysical conceptions of these systems and the conceptions which implicitly or explicitly have determined the lines of ethical thought.

Six schools or *darśanas* are usually reckoned as 'orthodox'. They are the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, the Uttara Mīmāṁsā or Vedānta, the Sāṁkhya, the Yoga, the Vaiśeshika, and the Nyāya. They are spoken of as orthodox because they are supposed to be in agreement with the teaching of the Vedas.

This is to a large extent a fiction, for in many points all of them disagree with the Vedas and with each other. There are, however, certain great doctrines in which all are agreed. Among the most notable of these are the doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsāra*, and, theoretically, the supreme authority and divine character of the Vedas.

To the modern philosophical student it will seem strange that the *Pūrva Mīmāṁsā* is included among the philosophical systems. In it is set forth the *karma kāṇḍa*, or 'work portion' of the Veda. It expounds the details of Vedic *dharma*, and the rewards that are attached to various works. These are in the main not ethical works, but the sacrificial works and other ritual observances of the Brāhmaṇas, reduced to some kind of a system. It is indeed hardly an independent system of philosophy, even in the Indian sense of the term, for it really serves as an introduction to the Vedānta, as the name itself indicates—the *earlier* Mīmāṁsā, in relation to the Uttara or *later* Mīmāṁsā. Deussen says that it is related to the Vedānta much in the same way as the Old Testament is related to the New Testament. But just as the New Testament supersedes the Old Testament, so does the Vedānta, the *jñāna kāṇḍa*, or part of knowledge, supersede the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, the *karma kāṇḍa*, or part of works. It is taught, nevertheless, in the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, that salvation can be attained through the right performance of these works, when they are performed without thought of reward.

One question which has a distinct ethical significance has been raised in connexion with the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā. It is the question whether it is or is not atheistic. The charge of atheism finds justification in a remark made by Bādarāyaṇa, the author of the *Vedānta Sūtras*, where he expounds the peculiar teaching of Jaimini, the author of the Sūtras of the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, regarding the operation of *karma*. He held that God would be guilty of cruelty and partiality if He rewarded and punished men according to their works, and that works produce their own result; 'in other

words, that for the moral government of the world no Lord is wanted'.[1] This is a point of view which certainly reveals an appreciation of one of the difficulties of the doctrine of *karma*.

The greatest and most characteristic system of Indian Philosophy is the *Vedānta*. Its greatest exponent was Śaṅkarāchārya, a thinker who was born in South India in the end of the eighth century A.D., living probably till about A.D. 850. His doctrines are expounded in his Commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa, the date of which is doubtful. Śaṅkarāchārya is recognized as the greatest philosophical thinker whom India has produced, and there has certainly been none who has left a deeper influence on Indian thought.

The central doctrine of the Vedānta may be enunciated very briefly. It is expressed in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (vi. 8) in the words spoken to Śvetaketu by his father, 'Tat tvam asi', 'Thou art that'. In these words there is taught the identity of the soul with Brahman. The individual soul falsely imagines that it exists independently, and that other beings have similar independent existence. The ignorance, *avidyā*, which accounts for this, is the root of all evil. The soul through ignorance is misunderstood, and instead of being known as it is, it is identified with its *upādhis*, or limitations. It is in this way that the illusion of the empirical self comes to be—the illusion of the self as limited in various ways. The self thinks of itself as agent and enjoyer, and it is this illusory self, alike deceiving and deceived, that is the subject of *saṁsāra*. The Vedānta seeks to show how through true knowledge, *vidyā*, the soul is to be delivered from its bondage to shadows, and led into freedom. It is not through becoming something which now it is not, but by realizing what it is: the self is Brahman.

The doctrine thus briefly outlined is expounded and elaborated in great detail. It is possible here to deal with only the most significant conceptions, and of these only with such

[1] Max Müller, *Six Systems*, p. 211.

as will help to make clear the ethical tendencies of the system. Let it be noted once more that there are certain principles which are common to all orthodox Hindu thought, that are taken for granted. It is assumed that the doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsāra* are valid, and that existence under conditions in which they apply, in other words empirical existence, is essentially evil. This is taken for granted, and the question is as to a way of escape from this evil state. The answer of the Vedānta involves a special theory of the nature of the Universe and of the Soul.

It is important to observe that the Vedānta does not maintain that the Universe as it presents itself to the ordinary mind is simply illusion. It is sometimes represented as if it did so, but the case is not so simple. The validity of the judgements which we continually pass on events taking place around us is not denied. It is true that the phenomenal world is the outcome of *avidyā*, but it has a certain relative reality. It is real for him who has not attained to the knowledge of Brahman. Thus Śaṅkara says: 'The entire complex of phenomenal existence is considered as true so long as the knowledge of Brahman and the Self of all has not arisen, just as the phantoms of a dream are considered to be true until the sleeper wakes'.[1] The same is true of popular beliefs and exercises. They are not meaningless or valueless. The worshipper of Brahman as personal really worships God, and he who speaks of Brahman as creator of the world speaks what is true. The whole Vedic system of religion is sound. But in all this the individual is at the stage of *aparā vidyā*, or lower knowledge, not *parā vidyā*, or higher knowledge. The former provides a religious philosophy, relatively true, for those who have not attained the higher knowledge. But from the point of view of *parā vidyā* all this is false. The phenomenal world is unreal, the worship of a personal God invalid, and the idea of the creation of the Universe a myth. All is Brahman, and Brahman is all. The application of predicates to him is illegitimate,

[1] Quoted by Max Müller, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 154.

for all predicates, even that of existence, are inadequate. He is misrepresented when in any way duality is ascribed to him. In this sense the world is *māyā*, illusion, and the *aparā vidyā* is false. Ignorance, *avidyā*, accounts for the illusion. But whence does it come? In some sense Brahman is the cause of it, as the magician is of the illusion which he projects. But this is only a figure. It is an answer to a question that will not arise for him who has attained to the knowledge of the identity of the self with Brahman. The white radiance of Reality is unstained, undifferentiated.

What then of the Self, which we are told is Brahman? This brings us to the peculiar psychology of the Vedānta. As has been said, the doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsarā* are unquestioningly held. The soul passes through death to re-birth, determined in its course by the *karma* which it has made. But the soul which migrates is the soul as obscured by *avidyā*. To this ignorance it owes the *upādhis*, limitations, which belong to it as a phenomenal existence. It is difficult to find an English equivalent for this word. The term 'faculties' perhaps is the nearest equivalent, but even it is inadequate and misleading. These *upādhis* are (1) the *Mukhyaprāṇa*, the vital spirit, the principle of the unconscious, vegetative life, presiding over the other organs of life; (2) the *Manas*, the organ of understanding and volition, which presides over (3) the *Indriyas*, the organs of perception and action. These together constitute the *Sūkshma Śarīra*, the subtle body, invisible, but material. The subtle body is distinguished from the *Sthūla Śarīra*, the gross body, which with death is decomposed, while the subtle body finds a home in another gross body. The subtle body does not change, but it is accompanied by (4) moral determination, the treasure of *karma* which it has acquired. By this the next form of existence is determined. Now, in all this we have nothing that belongs to the Soul in its real nature. In common thought the Soul is so represented as the outcome of ignorance. But ignorance does not simply misrepresent the Ātman. The

phenomenal soul is more than the merely passing product of a freak of the imagination from which one may turn at any time. Like the external world, it has a coherence and orderliness that prevent it from being so lightly set aside. To him who has not attained to the highest knowledge it is real.

We need not here enter into any account of the course that the soul with its *upādhis* takes after death—along the way of the fathers, or of the gods, or being debarred from either, according to its works and knowledge. Nor need we enter into any of the other psychological-eschatological questions connected with the state of the soul after the death of the body. Suffice it to say that the round of *saṁsāra* remains for all except those who have attained the higher knowledge. He who has attained to the knowledge of the identity of the self with Brahman, which involves the distinction of the self from its *upādhis* and consequently its freedom from them, has thereby attained *Moksha*, or freedom. This is a freedom for which one has not to wait till after death, but it may be possessed even in this life.

Max Müller has drawn attention to a discussion which has been long carried on, as to whether virtue is essential for the attainment of *Moksha*.[1] The question is perhaps hardly a relevant one. For, as has been pointed out in Book II, Chapter I, it is not quite just to interpret the knowledge which brings freedom as if it were of the nature of a purely intellectual intuition. If it were, then every one who yielded intellectual assent to the central propositions of the Vedānta, would thereby have freedom. The knowledge that is meant is more than that, involving activity of the will as well as of the intellect. Yet it is liable to misunderstanding, just as the Christian conception of faith is. And the result is that we have contradictory answers given to the question whether virtue is or is not necessary. There seems to be no real difficulty about the relation of good works to *Moksha* in the

[1] *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 166.

teaching of Śaṅkara. There can be no doubt that they help a man on to the stage at which deliverance becomes possible. And they do this in two ways, by their meritoriousness leading to re-birth in more favourable forms of being, and by their moral discipline helping the soul to freedom from the tyranny of the senses. It is in the second way that the operation of good works is of greatest importance, for meritorious works are of many kinds and most of them are devoid of strictly ethical character; and in any case it is held that the attainment of knowledge cannot be guaranteed by the performance of meritorious works. Speaking of the value of works as a means to knowledge, Deussen says of both the 'outward' means to knowledge (Vedic study, sacrifice, alms, penance, fasting) and the 'closer' means (tranquillity, self-restraint, renunciation, patience, concentration) that they do not, strictly speaking, produce knowledge as their fruit. 'These works are only auxiliaries to the attainment of knowledge, inasmuch as the man who leads a life of holy works is not overpowered by affections such as Passion, &c. According to this their rôle in the scheme of salvation would be not so much meritorious as ascetic.'[1] But in all this it is important to remember that when *Moksha* has been attained a stage has been reached at which morality has no longer any meaning; the ethical is transcended.

The distinction which has been drawn above between the meritorious and ascetic aspects of works is one which deserves somewhat closer attention. All works alike have merit or demerit in themselves, in addition to any influence they may have of an ascetic character, and so they contribute to the shaping of the 'moral determination' which accompanies the subtle body. This is a fact pointing to a difficulty which obtrudes itself in many places in our account of Hindu ethics. The difficulty is connected with the dualism existing between what in later thought have been called noumena and phenomena. Let us look at the case in this way. It is taught that

[1] Deussen, *System of the Vedānta*, p. 411 f.

all works bear their appropriate fruit. But then there is undoubtedly truth in the distinction that has been drawn between the meritorious and ascetic aspects of works, and this distinction has far-reaching consequences, though here we must beware of exaggeration. Those works which are described as ascetic are also meritorious, bearing their proper fruit in future lives. But the difficulty lies in this, that not all meritorious works contribute directly, at any rate, to the production of that condition of mind in which the attainment of *Moksha* becomes possible. Good deeds as well as evil deeds bind man to the chain of *saṁsāra*, for the fruit of all works alike has to be consumed. We see from this how ill the traditional morality has been related to fundamental philosophical conceptions. The system of *dharma*, with all its unethical admixtures, has been uncritically accepted. But alongside the strange medley of practices which constitute *dharma* there are those spiritual qualities and activities, which owe the value that is attributed to them to the relation in which they stand to the goal of all being. We have thus in a certain sense a double ethical standard. This was perhaps almost inevitable, for only an other-worldly and anti-social ethic could have been deduced from the ideal which the Vedānta presents. But it is nevertheless unsatisfactory that recognition should be given to a system of *dharma* which stands in no intelligible relation to the goal of all attainment.

This is a difficulty that cannot be got over by the argument that through the observance of *dharma* a man is helped on towards the stage at which it becomes possible for him to attain saving knowledge. It is true that the system of *dharma* does provide a way of life, at the end of which a man enters upon a mode of existence conducive to the attainment of the apprehension of the oneness of the self and Brahman. But the great mass of the details of *dharma* still remains unexplained. They certainly stand upon a different footing from the qualifications which are laid down by Śaṅkara as necessary for him who would study the Vedānta, viz. study

of the Veda, and the Four Requirements, (1) discerning between eternal and non-eternal substance, (2) renunciation of the enjoyment of reward here and in the other world, (3) the attainment of the six means—tranquillity, restraint, renunciation, resignation, concentration, belief, (4) the longing for liberation.[1] Apart from the implications of the principle that the study of the Veda is a necessary element in the preparation of the student of the Vedānta, we have here a set of principles partly ethical in character. But such teaching serves to bring into clearer light the meaninglessness of the great mass of the details of *dharma*.

The difficulty may be put more palpably if we try to show how the double standard touches practical life. And here it cannot be denied that the Christian ethic is much more consistent. On most interpretations of the Christian ethic, the ideal man is one who, while having his 'citizenship in heaven', enters with the greatest zest into the social life of the world, not being conformed to it, but seeking to transform it in accordance with the heavenly pattern. According to the Vedānta, the ideal is expressed, not in the perfect fulfilment even of what are admitted to be one's social duties, but ultimately in the negation of them. Our objection to this attitude to the common life of man in the world is not that it does not promise salvation as a reward for the fulfilment of one's worldly duties, for in this it agrees with Christianity, but that the realized ideal is not expressed in the richest social life. There is thus lacking to *dharma* that inspiration which is necessary to the living of the best ethical life. Obedience to it is in no way an expression of man's true being. It stands largely through the promise which it holds out to the mass of men of a second best as the reward of its observance. So the Vedānta has serious limitations on its practical side, the side of it with which we are here concerned. Max Müller has clearly apprehended this weakness in it, as is seen in the following passage:

I quite admit that, as a popular philosophy, the Vedānta would have

[1] Deussen, *The System of the Vedānta*, pp. 77 ff.

its dangers, that it would fail to call out and strengthen the manly qualities required for the practical side of life, and that it might raise the human mind to a height from which the most essential virtues of social and political life might dwindle away into mere phantoms.[1]

We turn from the Advaitist (monistic) philosophy of the Vedānta to the Dvaitist (dualistic) philosophy of the Sāṁkhya. Sāṁkhya ideas are prominent in some of the Upanishads, particularly in the *Kaṭha*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Praśna*, and *Maitrāyaṇī*. The *Mahābhārata* contains in parts a great deal of Sāṁkhya thought. We have seen that the *Bhagavadgītā* has a form of the Sāṁkhya as its philosophical basis, but other parts of the *Mahābhārata* also contain Sāṁkhyan ideas. The classical expression of the Sāṁkhya philosophy is found in the *Sāṁkhya Kārikā*, a work which belongs probably to the first half of the fourth century A. D.

The Sāṁkhya starts from the assumption of the validity of the doctrine of *karma* and *saṁsāra*, and of the essential misery of the world. This misery, it is held, is threefold. There is that which is due to ourselves, that which is due to others, and that which is due to fate. The Sāṁkhya professes to show a way of deliverance from this misery, through knowledge.

The ontology of the system is thoroughly dualistic. The phenomenal universe owes its being, or its being consciously experienced, to the coming together of two principles, *Purusha*, 'Soul', and *Prakṛiti*, 'nature'. *Prakṛiti* is also designated *Pradhān*, chief one, and *Avyakta*, unevolved. It has three *Guṇas*, originally conceived as constituents of *Prakṛiti*, later as qualities or moods, *Sattva* or goodness, *Rajas*, or passion, and *Tamas*, or darkness. It is through the activity of these moods that the unevolved develops itself. Through their activity the phenomenal universe, or the universe regarded as a possible object of knowledge, takes shape. But *Prakṛiti* by itself is unconscious. Conscious experience arises only when it is illuminated by *Purusha*. It is the subject for

[1] *Six Systems*, p. 192 f.

which *Prakṛiti* is the object. *Purusha* is described in terms not essentially different from those in which Brahman is described. The main difference between them, besides the fact that *Prakṛiti* is given an existence independent of it, is that *Purusha* is described as not one but many. This may seem to be no slight difference, and in truth it is not. But the practical implications of its manifoldness are not great, and the question whether it was many or one was even a subject of discussion among early thinkers. As contrasted with *Prakṛiti*, *Purusha* is inactive. These two are thought of as absolutely different from each other; yet it is through their union that the empiric self arises. The union has been compared to that of a lame man with a blind man on whose shoulders he is borne. *Purusha* remains in the bliss of isolation till its union with *Prakṛiti* brings it into the experience of a world of objects.

Prakṛiti differentiates itself under the influence of *Purusha*. From *Prakṛiti* first is derived *Buddhi*, intelligence or understanding. From it is derived *Ahaṁkāra*, or individuation. From it again are derived *Manas*, or mind, the five *buddhīndriyas*, or organs of perception, the five *karmendriyas*, or organs of action, and the five *tanmātras*, or fine elements. From these last, again, are derived the five *mahābhūtas*, or gross elements, which constitute the material universe. This brief statement by itself will not be particularly intelligible, and a few words may well be said in explanation; but even with much explanation the difficulty remains that we are dealing with terms to which there are no equivalents in English, and with conceptions some of which have nothing corresponding to them in Western thought; and there is the added difficulty that there seems to be considerable ambiguity in the use of the terms in Sāṁkhya writings. In the *Kārikā*, according to Professor Keith, Buddhi 'is defined as the power of decision, by which it seems to be distinguished from the mind, Manas, as the power which formulates the possible courses and carries out the decision, while on the intellectual side mind brings up

the material for concepts which the intellect formulates'.[1] But besides this psychological interpretation, *buddhi* and *manas* have also a cosmical significance to which but little attention is given in the *Kārikā*. *Ahaṁkāra*, the principle of individuation, is the principle in virtue of which the belief in an 'I', which is the subject of experiences, arises. The five *Buddhīndriyas*, the ear, the skin, the eyes, the tongue, and the nose, and the five *Karmendriyas*, voice, hands, feet, the organ of excretion, and the organ of generation, are, along with *Manas*, derived from *Ahaṁkāra* in its *Sattva* form, with the aid of *Rajas*. Similarly from it in its *Tamas* form are derived the five *Tanmātras*, the essences of sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell. These essences have no difference in them, but they give rise to the *Mahābhūtas*, or gross elements, earth, water, light, air, and ether, each of which is possessed of qualities, and each of which stands in a special relation to one of the five senses.

Every living being possesses a *liṅga deha* or *liṅga śarīra*, a subtle body, which migrates from one gross body to another in successive births. It is composed of *Buddhi*, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Manas*, the organs of sense and action, the fine elements, and the subtle parts of the gross elements. It is this subtle body, incorporeal in character, which receives the impressions made by deeds performed in the course of its various migrations, and by these it is determined as to the form of each new embodiment. Further it is the union of the spirit with this subtle body which is the cause of all misery, and 'salvation' is attained only through the breaking of the union, a consummation dependent in the Sāṁkhya, as in the Vedānta, on knowledge; but in this case the knowledge is not of the identity of the Self with Brahman, but of the distinction between *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*. When this knowledge has been attained, the illusory union which existed between them is broken; *Prakṛiti* withdraws itself from *Purusha*, the latter having realized the falsity of the attribution of the adventures

[1] Keith, *Sāṁkhya System*, p. 79.

of *Prakṛiti* to itself. *Purusha* now remains in eternal isolation, and *Prakṛiti* relapses into inactivity.

It is evident that in the Sāṁkhya as in the Vedānta, moral predicates do not apply to the state of him who has attained *Moksha*. With release from individuality, they no longer have any meaning. But this does not mean that morality has no significance at all. For to man in his unenlightened state moral distinctions have real value. The principles of *karma* and transmigration operate with absolute inflexibility. Every deed leads to its appropriate result, and the merit or demerit that one acquires brings one nearer to, or takes one farther from, a position at which final liberation becomes possible of attainment. But in this respect the teaching of the Sāṁkhya is not different from that of the Vedānta.

There is another aspect of Sāṁkhya ethical teaching which is more distinctive, though rather in the particular form in which it is expressed than in the practical outcome of it. In certain ways the value of virtues of an ascetic kind is emphasized. The *Guṇas* are interpreted in one aspect in an ethical way. There are three different kinds of action springing from them. *Sattva* is the occasion of good conduct, which consists in kindness, control, and restraint of the organs, freedom from hatred, reflection, displaying of supernatural powers. *Rajas* leads to indifferent conduct, which consists in passion, anger, greed, fault-finding, violence, discontent, rudeness, shown by change of countenance. *Tamas* occasions bad conduct, which consists in madness, intoxication, lassitude, nihilism, devotion to women, drowsiness, sloth, worthlessness, impurity.[1] All these actions, good and bad alike, are transcended when liberation is won, but the actions of the *Sattva Guṇa* are those which carry one on towards the point of attainment. It is when the *Sattva* mood is dominant that it becomes possible for the *Buddhi* to apprehend clearly its own nature as belonging to *Prakṛiti*, and to discriminate *Prakṛiti* from *Purusha*.

[1] Max Müller, *Six Systems*, p. 255.

The *Yoga* must be treated along with the Sāṁkhya, to which it is closely related. Indeed it is hardly entitled to be called a distinct system of philosophy, for in the strictly theoretical part of it it follows the Sāṁkhya with but slight deviations. The classical expression of the Yoga is the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, a writer who, until recent times, was generally identified with the grammarian of the same name, who flourished in the second century B.C. It has now been established that they were two distinct persons, and the author of the Sūtras undoubtedly lived at a date several centuries later, though his precise period is still uncertain. The Yoga, as a philosophy, follows the Sāṁkhya in all important details, as has been already said. The only important difference is that while the Sāṁkhya is 'atheistic', the Yoga recognizes an Īśvara, or Lord. This may be a rather loose form of statement, for the Sāṁkhya does not deny the existence of gods; it fails only to find any place for a Supreme Being. In the Yoga system, on the other hand, Īśvara has a very definite and essential place. The accounts that are given of him are by no means consistent. It is clear that he is not thought of as in any way transcending the Sāṁkhyan dualism of *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*. He is a particular soul. As Patañjali himself puts it:

> Īśvara, the Lord, is a Purusha (Self) that has never been touched by sufferings, actions, rewards, or consequent dispositions.[1]

In him the *Sattva Guṇa* shines eternally undimmed. The primacy that he possesses among *Purushas* is not something that he has attained, for he stands above all limitations which belong to them. More than that, it is in some sense through his will that the union of *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti* takes place, in other words, that the phenomenal world comes into being. And, what is equally important, he is gracious in his attitude towards men. Mādhava has put the case well in the following words:

> This school accepts the old twenty-five principles (of the Sāṁkhya),

[1] i. 24. Quoted by Max Müller, *Six Systems*, p. 320.

'Nature,' &c. : only adding the Supreme Being as the twenty-sixth—a Soul untouched by affliction, action, fruit, or stock of desert, who of His own will assumed a body in order to create, and originated all secular or Vaidic traditions, and is gracious towards those living beings who are burned in the charcoal of mundane existence.[1]

It is important to bear in mind the fact that the Lord of the Yoga occupies a place that is by no means central in the system. It is essentially a practical system, and the importance of Īśvara lies in the function which he fulfils of helping in their progress towards liberation those who are devoted to him. The predominantly practical purpose of the Yoga is indicated by its very name. It is derived from the root *yuj*, meaning to yoke, and the sense in which it was originally used was probably that of yoking one's self or undertaking exercise with a view to the attainment of an end. The *Yogasūtra*, accordingly, supplies us with practical directions intended to help the soul towards the attainment of the end laid down by the Sāṁkhya. Some thinkers have misconceived its purpose, and in this they have been misled partly by a false interpretation of the term 'Yoga'. They have taken the root idea to be that of joining. Even Barth fell into this error, when he spoke of Yoga as 'the state of union'.[2] Such an interpretation involves the putting of Īśvara in the central place, while undoubtedly his place is alongside the other instruments through the help of which that discrimination is made possible, which is the end of Sāṁkhya and Yoga alike—the discrimination of *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*. This position is not inconsistent with the statement of Professor Berriedale Keith that in the conception of Yoga 'there seems to be an almost necessary, or at least normal, reference to a fixing of the mind on God'.[3] It is the yoking of one's self especially to this task which is the distinctive element in the teaching of the Yoga. But this is but a means to the end. In the end itself there is no place for Īśvara.

[1] *Sarva-Darśana-Saṅgraha*, Cowell and Gough, p. 232.
[2] *Religions of India*, p. 79.
[3] *The Sāṁkhya System*, p. 55.

The Yoga springs from a source more primitive than that of any of the other philosophies. It seeks to turn to account practices which belong to an early stage in the development of man, and which exercised a great influence in India both among the early inhabitants, and, in certain forms, among the Aryan conquerors. We have already had occasion to speak of the place of *tapas* in the practices followed in India in early times. It is in it especially that we have the basis of Yoga. There were two sides to the practices which this word represents. There was first of all the superstitious idea, not altogether lacking basis in fact, that through the practice of austerities of certain kinds supernatural powers could be attained. There was developed later the conception of *tapas* as having value as a discipline of a more properly ethical kind. It is particularly this latter purpose that is kept in view in the Yoga philosophy. Yoga has been defined as *chitta-vṛitti-nirodha*, which means suppression of the modifications of the mind, and the whole course of discipline which is prescribed has this end in view. From this point of view we have in the exercises of the Yoga something that is comparable, for example, to the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, though, of course, the goal to which the exercises are supposed to lead, and the special character of the exercises themselves, are very different.

There are eight stages in the process whereby the devotee progresses towards liberating knowledge. These stages are: (1) *Yama* or forbearance, which consists in 'not wishing to kill, veracity, not stealing, continence, not coveting'.[1] (2) *Niyama*, or religious observances, consisting in 'purifications, contentment, mortification (*tapas*), recitation of texts, and resignation to the Lord'.[2] (3) *Āsana*, or posture, under which are described various postures of the body conducive to meditation. (4) *Prāṇāyāma*, or regulation of the breath, which comprises breathing exercises, which owe their importance partly to fantastic physiological conceptions and partly

[1] *Sarva-Darśana-Saṅgraha*, p. 263. [2] *Ib.*, p. 263.

to the observed psychical effects of regulation of the breath. The value attributed to this discipline is indicated by the following quotation :

> When the element air is thus comprehended and its restraint is accomplished, the evil influence of works which conceal discriminating knowledge is destroyed ; hence it has been said—'There is no austerity superior to regulation of the breath !'[1]

(5) *Pratyāhāra*, or restraint, which means the withdrawing of the senses from their objects, and the accommodating of them to the nature of the *Buddhi*. In this way the *Buddhi* ceases to be affected from without, and it advances towards an understanding of the true relation of *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*. (6) *Dhāraṇā*, or attention, which means the fixing of the mind on some object, a part of the body or something external to it, so making 'the perfect asylum the dwelling-place of his mind'. (7) *Dhyāna*, or contemplation, 'a continued succession of thoughts, intent on objects of that kind and desiring no other'.[2] (8) *Samādhi*, or meditation, or 'concentration'. There is no precise equivalent for the word in English, and perhaps the expression 'meditative absorption' which Max Müller uses is a better translation than either of those which we have given. There are various degrees of this meditative absorption, but we need attend to only the two great stages in its development. There is *saṁprajñāta samādhi*, in which there is an object of meditation, and finally *asaṁprajñāta samādhi*, 'that meditation in which distinct recognition of an object is lost'. When this stage has been reached the effects of *karma* vanish, for ignorance has disappeared, and *Buddhi* is discriminated from *Purusha*. All causes and effects are absorbed into *Prakṛiti*, and the soul, no longer ignorantly identified with *Buddhi*, reaches *Kaivalya*, complete isolation.

Much of this has but little direct relevance to our ethical inquiry, but in all the importance of *Vairāgya*, or freedom from passion, is emphasized. It is put alongside the exercises

[1] *Sarva-Darśana-Saṅgraha*, p. 268. [2] *Ib.*, p. 269.

as a means for the attainment of the suppression of the modifications of the mind. It is not something different from all that is contained in the exercises, for in some of them there are elements which contribute directly to *Vairāgya*. It may not be improper here to draw attention to the significance which the idea of *Vairāgya* has not only in the Yoga, but in all the Hindu systems of thought. Max Müller says:

> It is interesting to see how deeply this idea of Vairāgya or dispassionateness must have entered into the daily life of the Hindus. It is constantly mentioned as the highest excellence not for ascetics only, but for everybody. It sometimes does not mean much more than what we mean by the even and subdued temper of the true gentleman, but it signifies also the highest unworldliness and a complete surrender of all selfish desires.[1]

In the Yoga, at any rate it stands for the most complete unworldliness. There is no place for social ideals in the goal of attainment which the Yoga offers. The discipline which is inculcated has reference only to the liberation of the soul of the individual who practises it. When others do come in at all, they are not considered as members of a society of persons whose well-being is intimately bound up with mine, but as beings the injury of whom interferes with my own progress towards liberation. The social duties that are prescribed are, therefore, of a purely negative kind. They are such as abstinence from murder, falsehood, theft, unchastity, and sensuality.

In modern times it is the miraculous powers that are believed possible of attainment through Yogic practices that have been specially sought, and it has been less practised as a means to the attainment of final deliverance. In this way it may be said that it has a distinctly anti-moral tendency. The cultivation of the spiritual life is given a wrong direction when its object is the acquisition not of the social virtues but of powers by which one may be enabled to perform all kinds of incredible physical feats. At its best the Yoga has little or no

[1] *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 339.

place for the life of the 'good citizen and the honest neighbour', and at its worst it opens the way for all kinds of immoral frauds.

The two remaining philosophies, the *Nyāya* and the *Vaiśeshika,* may be dealt with more briefly. They have been regarded as a single system of thought as have been the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga. The date of the Nyāya-sūtras of Gotama is extremely uncertain, but the sixth century has been tentatively suggested;[1] and a date not far remote from this may be assigned to the Sūtras of Kaṇāda, which are the classical expression of the Vaiśeshika. The term Nyāya means 'going into a subject' or 'analysis', and the term 'logic' has frequently been given as its equivalent. But as Max Müller and other writers have pointed out, logic is not the sole or chief end of Gotama's philosophy, its aim being salvation, as is that of all the other *darśanas.* The term Vaiśeshika means 'particular', and is derived from *Viśesha,* or 'particularity', which is one of the categories under which the inquiries dealt with in the system are classified.

Both these systems teach that emancipation is to be attained through knowledge—the Nyāya, through the knowledge of the sixteen topics of Gotama, and the Vaiśeshika, through knowledge of the seven categories of Kaṇāda. It is not necessary for us to go into the details which are contained in these Topics and Categories, for they have little importance for the student of ethics. It will suffice if a few remarks be made regarding the more general tendency of the two systems. Both set out from the assumption which they share with all the other philosophies, that all individual existence is evil, and that salvation means freedom from the bondage of individual existence. It is in their accounts of the particular character of the bondage in which man finds himself, of the method of release, and of the nature of the positive state which is the

[1] The most recent scholarship, however, places them in the fourth or fifth century.

goal, that the various systems differ from each other. The Nyāya and the Vaiśeshika differ from both the Vedānta and the Sāṁkhya in holding that deliverance is attained through that knowledge which makes manifest the essential difference of soul and body. The union of soul and body is the occasion of the evil which besets our life, and if the difference between them be apprehended, then the individual will be freed from the sufferings which the union with the body occasions. Knowledge of the truth leads to the destruction of desire and aversion. Gotama calls the goal to which knowledge leads, *Niḥśreyasa* or *Non plus ultra*, or *Apavarga*, bliss. This is a state not positively defined. It is sufficient that deliverance is attained from what is positive evil.

There is little in these systems that is of importance for the student of ethics—not in the Topics of Gotama, or in the Categories of Kaṇāda, or even in the atomic cosmogony of the latter. We have the same general attitude as in the other philosophies to the great questions that gather round the conduct of life in the world, and the way of deliverance. And the practical influence of the systems at the present day is so much less than that of the three great systems with which we have just dealt, that we seem to be justified in passing over them with this brief mention.

These great systems of thought, differing in many things, have some features in common which have deep significance ethically. As regards the goal of all attainment, it will be seen that the practical consequences of the various ways in which it is conceived are the same. Profound differences may be discovered in the nature of the end in itself as it is understood by different schools. From the metaphysical standpoint there may be great differences between the various conceptions of the state of the emancipated soul—as realizing its oneness with Brahman, or as dwelling in isolation from *Prakṛiti*, or as freed from the trammels of the body—but all alike involve the same attitude towards the phenomenal world. To put it

briefly, for him who has attained to the philosophical standpoint, to whatever school he may belong, the ethical is transcended. The way of works is a lower way, which has a certain relative value, leading to temporal rewards. But the philosopher is on the quest of deliverance from work and reward alike. This is a point of view which will be examined more closely later.

There is another important feature of the philosophies, not unconnected with this, that all of them, even the Yoga in a way, teach the doctrine of salvation through knowledge. This is a feature that may strike us as surprising even after our study of the Upanishads, for it is a way of looking at the matter very foreign to the Western mind. We have to bear in mind the fact that Hindu religious and philosophical thought starts out from presuppositions of a kind very different from those of Christian thought, and indeed of Western thought generally. The great root evil in man has been understood to be not sin or moral evil, but ignorance or intellectual error. This accounts for the various evils to which flesh is heir. There is no place in the philosophies for a blessedness that is the inheritance of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. The only blessedness to which that could lead would be a temporary and unsatisfying one. Not, let it be noted, that sin is not evil and to be condemned, and that righteousness is not good and to be praised. To charge Indian philosophers with such views would be as unfair as it would be to say that in Western thought ignorance is not regarded as an evil. But whereas in the West the tendency has been to regard moral evil as the root of all evil, the Hindu has regarded ignorance as the fundamental evil. As Deussen has put it, speaking with special reference to the Vedānta :

Christianity sees the essence of man in will, Brāhmaṇism in knowledge; therefore for the former, salvation consists in a transformation of the will, a new birth, whereby the old becomes the new man ; for the latter

in a transformation of knowledge, in the dawning of the consciousness that one is not an individual but Brahman, the totality of all Being.[1]

The antithesis here is between Christianity and Brāhmaṇism, but if we substitute the term 'Western thought' for 'Christianity' there would still be much truth in it. Western thought has seldom advanced such claims for knowledge as has Indian philosophy, and it has even found it difficult to grasp the Indian point of view. The deeper implications of this will be discussed later, but it is well that attention should be drawn, in connexion with the philosophies, to a feature so characteristic of Indian thought.

Lastly, it may be observed here that so far as morality is recognized at all in the philosophical schools, it is a morality for which they do not supply the norm. They give us no principle by reference to which moral duties may be determined. This statement may require some qualification, for, as we have seen, we do have the basis for ascetic doctrine in certain forms. But for social morality there is no basis, and where it is enjoined it is on grounds that have no direct relation to what may be called the absolute good.

These criticisms do not apply in their entirety to one formulation of the Vedānta philosophy which we have reserved for brief separate treatment. Rāmānuja, a South Indian thinker of the twelfth century, interpreted the Vedānta Sūtras on lines different from Śaṅkarāchārya's presentation. Where Śaṅkarāchārya found an absolute monism, Rāmānuja found what has been called *Viśishta-Advaita*, or qualified monism. The motive to this interpretation was partly intellectual and partly practical. The great stream of philosophical thought which comes most clearly to view in the Upanishads contained within it various currents. Philosophical thinkers, bound by the sacred traditions, were able to exercise considerable liberty in their speculations through availing themselves of those currents which were set in the direction of their own principles

[1] *System of the Vedānta*, p. 403 f.

and conveniently ignoring the others. Modern scholars are generally agreed, though they are by no means unanimous, that Śaṅkarāchārya laid hold on what are really the dominant ideas of the Upanishads, but other thinkers were able to find texts enough to justify their own philosophical doctrines. Rāmānuja was able to find a basis for a philosophy in which, while the absolute supremacy of Brahman is maintained, the doctrine of *māyā* is rejected, and the reality of the world and of individual souls is admitted. In this he was partly determined by certain important religious influences. There had been for long in South India a strong Vaishṇavite movement of a definitely theistic character, and Rāmānuja was caught up in the full stream of this movement.[1] He is known in the history of religion as one of the great exponents of *bhakti*, and as a successor of the great unknown who wrote the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the creative theologian of the Śrī-Vaishṇava sect. The ardent devotion with which his heart glowed for God in the form of *Vishṇu Nārāyaṇa* was the expression of a religious experience with which the Advaitism of Śaṅkarāchārya was incompatible.

Rāmānuja's philosophical position may be briefly summarized. Brahman is existence, knowledge, infinite. He is the cause of the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the world, not merely the efficient but also the material cause. There is no existence without and independent of him on which he operates in his work of producing the world of things and of individuals; all existence is the body of Brahman. The whole Universe undergoes periodical dissolutions, in which matter and individual souls are resolved into a subtle condition, from which they again evolve when the process of re-creation begins. But they are in their essence eternal, having this eternity as modes of Brahman. The position of Rāmānuja is thus distinguished from that of the Sāṁkhya thinkers, who hold to the independent existence of *Prakṛiti* as

[1] For an account of the life and work of Rāmānuja see Govindāchārya, *Life of Rāmānujāchārya*.

the basis of the world of experience. At the same time the advaitist distinction of *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā* ceases to apply, for the world is not the outcome of ignorance, but is real. Provision is thus made for a relationship between the soul and God which is foreign to the thought of Śaṅkarāchārya. God is knowable, not merely by that lower knowledge which obscures his real nature, but truly. There is no validity in the distinction between the God of religion and the Absolute of philosophical thought, between Īśvara and Brahman. It is through knowledge that deliverance is attained, but there are other elements in the case which serve to show the profound difference between it and the doctrine of Śaṅkarāchārya. According to the latter, deliverance is found in an intuition in which the distinction of subject and object is overcome. According to Rāmānuja, as will be clear from what has already been said, this distinction cannot be overcome, and the interpretation of the text, 'Thou art that', as implying identity with a non-qualified Brahman, is unsound. Brahman has various qualities, and it is noteworthy that in his relations with individuals he is gracious. In his essential nature he is not the undifferenced Absolute, but God, living and active, the Supreme Person, on whose favour or disfavour depend the fruits of *karma*.

> Since bondage springs from *ajñāna* in the form of an eternal stream of karman, it can be destroyed only through knowledge of the kind maintained by us. Such knowledge is to be attained only through the due daily performance of religious duties as prescribed for a man's caste and āśrama, such performance being sanctified by the accompanying thought of the true nature of the Self, and having the character of propitiation of the highest Person.[1]

All this involves, on the philosophical side, an entirely different doctrine of the nature of reality, and, on the religious side, an entirely different conception of the relationship of the individual with God. It is from the latter point of view that

[1] *Vedānta-Sūtras* with Rāmānuja's *Commentary* (*S. B. E.*), vol. xlviii, p. 147.

we see most clearly the practical and ethical outcome of the teaching of Rāmānuja. The whole round of religious observance is brought into close relation with the process whereby release is attained, as not simply the scaffolding by the aid of which one is enabled to reach the stage at which *vidyā* becomes possible, but as an essential part of the process, and the hiatus between the religion of common life and the higher religion by which one is carried on to the ultimate goal is overcome. The study of the Karma-Mīmāṁsā is, accordingly, necessary for him who would attain to true knowledge. It is a preparation for the higher study of the Śārīraka-Mīmāṁsā, the last part of the Vedas. It is necessary, because, while the end is release from nescience, *saṁsāra* and *karma* are not unreal as they are represented to be in the teaching of Śaṅkara. They are real, and their continuance depends on the will of Brahman. So the knowledge which brings release, or which is release, is not of the nature of a merely intellectual intuition; it is attainable only through the divine favour.

> The Vedānta texts . . . give instruction on a subject which transcends the sphere of all the other means of knowledge, viz. the highest Person who is free from all shadow even of imperfection, and a treasure-house as it were of all exalted qualities in their highest state of perfection; on sacrifices, gifts, oblations, which are helpful towards the propitiation of that Person; on praise, worship, and meditation, which directly propitiate him; and on the rewards which he, thus propitiated, bestows, viz. temporal happiness and final Release.[1]

There are thus two elements in the knowledge which brings final release, knowledge of the true nature of Brahman, and *bhakti*, which involves the ability to realize continually the immediate presence of Brahman. The performance of works prescribed by the Vedas for the different *āśramas* is therefore necessary both as an intellectual discipline, and as a discipline which contributes to the purification of the heart. Details are given of the conditions which help to the attainment of

[1] *Vedānta-Sūtras*, p. 627 f.

knowledge thus understood. He mentions the three conditions laid down in the *Bṛihadārāṇyaka Upanishad*, iii. 5, viz. learning, childlikeness,[1] and sageness, and following the *Vākyakāra*, he gives another statement of seven conditions, (1) keeping the body unpolluted by unclean food, (2) absence of attachment, (3) repeated reflection, (4) performance of religious works, (5) good conduct, (6) freedom from dejection, (7) freedom from exultation. This shows that the favour of God is not something that is arbitrarily bestowed, but that is to be obtained through the observance of conditions intellectual, moral, emotional, and ceremonial. Knowledge, as thus understood, is extremely pleasing to God. It destroys the effect of past sins, and even of good works, but as the latter help one in the attainment of knowledge, it is not till death that their effects are destroyed. The soul which has attained this experience enters at the death of the body into that state in which he is most truly himself. Individuality remains, consciousness widens out into omniscience, and there is made possible for the soul the fullest realization of all its wishes. But most important of all is the communion that the soul enjoys with God, with whom it is bound by ties of the most intimate love.

This brief summary will serve to show that we have in the teaching of Rāmānuja a very different interpretation of the classical texts from that which we have in Śaṅkarāchārya. Whether it is as faithful to the sense of these texts is a question which we cannot here discuss. It certainly is an interpretation which is more in keeping with the needs of ordinary men, furnishing them with a philosophy of religion and of life that gives some meaning and direction to the purposes which govern their daily activities. How far it provides the basis for a really satisfactory ethic is the question to which we must now direct our attention.

It is obvious that some of the main objections which were offered from the ethical side to the philosophy of advaitism

[1] See Sukhtaṅkar, *Teachings of Vedānta according to Rāmānuja*, p. 74.

have no application here. There is recognition of the worth of individuality which gives to the activity of the individual a significance infinitely greater than it could have in that system. There is the denial of the doctrine of *māyā*, with the determinism which this doctrine involves, viewed from the ethical standpoint. The question of freedom in the sense in which it has been raised in modern ethical discussions hardly arises in Indian philosophy, but there is in the writings of Rāmānuja some recognition of individual freedom. And there is the clear presentation of the idea that the knowledge which is deliverance is not merely an awakening to the nature of reality to which one was blinded by ignorance, but that something is actually accomplished through activity on the part of the individual, and that activity enters essentially into the process by which he is led to the attainment of the true end of his being. In short, the individual finds himself when deliverance is attained, not in a state in which individuality is transcended, but in a state in which the limitations by which in normal human life it is restricted, are removed. Recognition is accordingly given to the importance of certain distinctively ethical qualities. Such are evenness of temper, absence of pride, self-control, and the like. These, it is true, had a place in advaitist teaching, but they have a deeper meaning and greater value when thought of as in some way contributing to the shaping of an indestructible individuality.

Where the philosophy of Rāmānuja is weakest is in its failure to provide a place for society. Like the other systems of philosophy it has the individual and his deliverance in view, and the idea of a city of God does not seem to have been conceived. We shall have occasion to remark in later parts of our discussion that this is one of the great weaknesses of Hindu ethical thinking generally, that it has left society unphilosophized, tradition being the guide in a realm of human experience which should have been related to reality as a whole. The outcome in Rāmānuja is that his lofty teaching regarding the relationship of the soul to God has not as its counterpart

any adequate teaching regarding the relation of individual to individual. It is a relationship which is incompatible with worldliness and self-seeking, and as such it is a purifying influence in the life of the individual, but it does not give to man a principle which will guide him in his social relationships. Indeed, if we are to accept the accounts which have been given of the actual religious devotion which the influence of Rāmānuja inspired while he lived, we shall find that it expressed itself at times in acts morally reprehensible. The story is told, to take but one example, of how a woman sold her honour that she might obtain the means of entertaining Rāmānuja. Here is her line of reasoning:

> To honour a guest like Rāmānuja, I will even sin. St. Parakāla, in the old days, robbed and cheated people in order to serve God. He ensconced himself in fastnesses, waylaid men, stripped them of their goods, and offered them to God. Even Lord Raṅga himself was once eased by him of all his precious jewels; and with them feasts were given to the faithful. Creatures whirl round the wheel of *Saṁsāra*, but the Guru comes with his teachings, and extricates them from this; and gives them God. To repay the Guru for this is impossible. Hence I will even sell my body and worship him therewith. For God himself has said:—'If for *My* sake thou sinnest, it becometh merit; all merit without reference to Me becometh sin.'[1]

Let it be observed that here we are far from the idea of an impure worship of God, but we have a worship which can be followed at the expense of the neglect of social duty. A couplet from Whittier comes to one's mind in this connexion:

> Thou well canst spare a love of Thee
> That ends in hate of man.

This does not indeed end in hate of man, but it puts devotion to God, and to the Guru as the representative of God, in a false relation to duty to man.

[1] Govindāchārya, *Life of Rāmānujāchārya*, p. 117.

CHAPTER V

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

It is necessary now to turn back and to give some attention to certain currents of thought which we have so far to a large extent ignored. During the four or five centuries preceding the Christian era the idea of incarnation was taking shape, resulting in the recognition of Vishṇu with his various incarnations as objects of worship on the same footing as Brahmā. The great epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, show us this movement in progress, and later, from the fifth or sixth century A. D., there began to appear those writings known as Purāṇas, which drew their materials largely from the epics, and which were sectarian works, composed with the object of exalting their special divinities. This development was, to some extent at least, the outcome of the influence of Buddhism on Hinduism. In order to maintain itself in the presence of Buddhism as the religion of the people, Hinduism had to modify itself, and among the other changes which took place in it elements drawn from aboriginal cults found a place in it. Of great importance also from the religious point of view is *Śakti* worship, the worship of the *Śakti*, or energy, of the god, conceived as his consort, which was a special development of Śaivite sectarianism. The Tantras are the manuals of this movement.

These remarkable developments are of the greatest importance for the student of the history of religion; but, for the student of the history of ethics, their details have no special significance. They might furnish materials for an interesting chapter on the history of Indian morals, but all that is of

interest to the ethical thinker as distinct from the psychologist may be gathered up in the statement that in many of its expressions this sectarian religion is non-moral; and that in some cases, as in Tantric worship especially, it has immoral implications.

But there is one very important line of development which we cannot dismiss in this summary way. This is what may be called the *bhakti* movement. The term *bhakti* is derived from the Sanskrit root *bhaj*, which in one of its uses means 'to adore'. It therefore means 'adoration', and in its more distinctive use, 'adoration of, or loving devotion to, God'. The term itself has a long history, and the idea a history much longer still. But for this we must leave the reader to the guidance of writers on the history of Hindu religion. It will be sufficient to state that the first great definite presentations of *bhakti* in literature are found in the *Mahābhārata*, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, and in what is known as the *Nārāyaṇīya* Section. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar in his *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Minor Religious Systems*, has traced the process by which the religion of the *Bhagavadgītā*, with its worship of Vāsudeva-Kṛishṇa, developed and was modified, other cults and other philosophical conceptions mingling with or influencing it. On the mythological side the tales of the adventures of the boy Kṛishṇa with the cowherdesses had great influence on the direction of the religious movement, and in particular Rādhā, the mistress of Kṛishṇa, came to be an important object of worship. Later Rāma came to be exalted and worshipped as God, and the whole history of later *bhakti* is connected with the various forms that the worship of Kṛishṇa and Rādhā, and of Rāma, sometimes in association with Sītā, took. On the philosophical side the most important fact is the new interpretation of the ancient philosophical texts given by Rāmānuja, who in the eleventh century provided an intellectual foundation for *bhakti*, which the monistic philosophy had done so much to undermine. It was this influence which was most powerful in what has been called the Hindu Reformation,

and in the 'Four Churches of the Reformation' we have evidence of the new strength and vitality which had been imparted to the spirit of *bhakti*. These Churches are known respectively as (1) the Śri-saṁpradāya of Rāmānuja, (2) the Brahma-saṁpradāya of Madhva, (3) the Rudra-saṁpradāya of Vishṇuswāmin, and (4) the Sanakādi-saṁpradāya of Nimbārka. These Churches are based on different theological foundations. The first held a qualified monism—*viśishṭādvaita*, the second a dualism on the lines of the Sāṁkhya-Yoga, the third a pure monism—*śuddhādvaita*, and the fourth a philosophy which is a curious blend of monism and pluralism. Yet all agree on certain points. They hold to the belief in God as in some way personal. They also agree in holding that the soul is essentially personal and possessed of inalienable individuality. It is also immortal, finding its true being not in absorption in the Supreme, but in a relation with him of inextinguishable love. All agree accordingly in rejecting the doctrine of *Māyā*.

Sir R. G. Bhandarkar has well summarized what is to be said regarding the relations of the various Vaishṇava systems to each other in the following paragraph:

> The points of contact between these various Vaishṇava systems are that their spiritual elements are essentially derived from the *Bhagavadgītā*, that Vāsudeva as the name of the Supreme Being stands in the background of all, and that spiritual monism and world-illusion are denounced by them equally. The differences arise from the varied importance that they attach to the different spiritual doctrines; the prominence that they give to one or other of the three elements that were mingled with Vāsudevism; the metaphysical theory that they set up; and the ceremonial that they impose upon their followers. The *Bhagavadgītā* was supplemented in later times by the Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās and the Purāṇas such as the *Vishṇu* and the *Bhāgavata*, and other later works of that description. These occasionally elucidated some of the essential doctrines, laid down the ceremonial, and brought together a vast mass of legendary matter to magnify the importance of their special teachings and render them attractive.[1]

In studying the history of *Bhakti* in modern times we

[1] *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, &c.*, p. 101.

are faced by a strange jungle of sects and subsects related to each other in the general way that has just been indicated. Ethically the worship which some of them follow issues in a pure morality, while that of others issues in the wildest licentiousness. On the whole the most attractive forms of *bhakti* are those associated with Rāma, and it is in connexion with some of the forms of the worship of Rādhā that some of the worst excesses have appeared. The *Bhagavadgītā* and the works of Rāmānuja, widely separated in time, are the great expressions of *bhakti* in its most reflective manifestations. They breathe a spirit that is lofty and pure; they represent a devotion that is emotional but restrained, and a morality that is weak on the active and social side, but that contains elements in it of great worth. These have already been discussed, and it is unnecessary to return to them now, but we shall see the strength of their influence in much of the *bhakti* of later times.

But in the religious movement following the Reformation we see the powerful operation of influences of a different kind. Through the Purāṇas there were made current stories regarding the boyhood of Kṛishṇa which served to set him in a light utterly different from that in which he is seen in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The documents which were most influential in this way were the *Harivaṁśa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and the latter in particular was powerful in determining the lines which certain forms of later Vaishṇavism took. Kṛishṇa is related to have spent his youth among herdsmen; and tales are told of his many youthful pranks and of his sports with the Gopīs, the wives and daughters of the herdsmen, and especially with Rādhā, who is not yet however mentioned by name. These tales became the basis of a worship of Kṛishṇa which expressed itself in highly emotional and ecstatic forms.

The *Bhaktiratnāvalī*, a work, dating from about A. D. 1400, which consists of extracts from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, shows how this influence wrought in one of its lines. It commends the *bhakti-mārga* as the only way of deliverance.

Neither charity, nor asceticism, nor sacrifices, nor purificatory rites, nor penances and religious vows please him. He is pleased with pure devotion. Everything else is futile, mere mockery.[1]

The *Bhaktiratnāvalī* is free from the impurer elements that are found in Kṛishṇa worship. The passages contained in it consist largely of exaggerated praise of the efficacy of a *bhakti* which expresses itself in a violently emotional attachment to the Lord. Singing his praise, bowing to him, and shampooing his feet are among the means by which the ecstatic union, in which is man's deliverance, may be attained. And extravagant language is used regarding the efficacy of calling upon him.

Even a murderer of a Brāhman, of his own mother and teacher, and of a cow, even the eater of dog's carrion, even a low-born brat of a Śūdra mother and a Nishāda (low-born pariah) father becomes purified by singing the praise of the lord.[2]

In such teaching there is no room for ethics. Devotion furnishes a way, indeed the only way, of escape from the fruits of *karma*.

Just as gold, heated by fire, leaves off its dross and regains its own appearance, so is the human soul cleared of its karmic impurities by the application of devotion and attains to me (by regaining the purity that is mine).[3]

But this purification does not constitute the foundation for a new and loftier ethical life. It does mean, however, and it is important that this should be recognized, a withdrawal of the *bhakta* from bondage to the world of sense. There are indeed passages which might seem to contradict this, but these hardly represent the most characteristic teaching of the work. The following, taken from the passages in which are set forth the causes that generate *bhakti*, reveals what it involves on the moral side:

May we have the company of saints. Their hearts are full of com-

[1] *Bhaktiratnāvalī*. Eng. Trans., p. 26.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 106.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 38.

passion towards all living beings and are free from passions and are endowed with sincerity, straightforwardness and other good qualities.[1]

But in many modern sects we see the influence of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* leading to a devotion even more ecstatic, and bound up with practices morally evil. Nimbārka has been already mentioned as the founder of the Sanakādi-saṁpradāya. He flourished later than Rāmānuja, and is said to have lived at Nimba, a village in the Bellary district. The philosophical basis of his system was similar to that of Rāmānuja, but what is of more importance is the place that he gave to Rādhā in his religious teaching. He taught at Bṛindāban, and from there his influence spread widely over Northern India. In the same line of religious development are the sects of Vallabha and Chaitanya, who taught in Northern India and Bengal respectively during the sixteenth century.

We cannot here enter into a detailed discussion of the philosophical and religious doctrines of these teachers. In both an important place is given to the sports of Kṛishṇa, with consequences unfavourable to the highest morality. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar says regarding the sect of Vallabhāchārya :

> The spirit of this system . . . seems to be sportive enjoyment and it cannot but be expected to influence the ordinary life of its followers. Moral rigidity culminating in indifference to worldly enjoyments and self-abnegation does not appear to be a characteristic of this school.[2]

This is certainly a very moderate statement. For Vallabha teaches that the highest fruit of *bhakti* is admission to the eternal sports of Kṛishṇa. Some apologists have sought to defend his teaching from the charge of immorality which this ideal seems to justify, on the ground that the erotic language used does nót, if properly understood, supply any incitement to immoral conduct ; and it has been maintained that the language of exalted devotion tends to take similar forms in the highest and purest religious expression. This may be so, but

[1] *Bhaktiratnāvalī*, p. 52. [2] *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, &c.*, p. 82.

the fact remains that in the Vallabha sect the love that has been offered to God has been described in figures that have such predominantly sexual implications that the worship of Kṛishṇa has in certain quarters been accompanied by licentious practices. Proof of this was given in the Bombay High Court in 1862, in the notorious case of the Mahārājās of Bombay.

Chaitanya followed and inculcated a worship of an even more emotional and ecstatic kind, the object of which was Kṛishṇa similarly conceived. But he held personally to a more ascetic type of morality, and in particular to stricter views regarding the relations of the sexes. He taught that the individual soul is at first distinct from the Supreme Soul, but through love becomes full of the Supreme Soul, loses all sense of individuality, and becomes absorbed in Him.

> When love attains to the highest pitch, it constitutes itself into Rādhā, who is the most loveable of all and full of all qualities.[1]

In the later history of the sect of Chaitanya, partly through the influence of his own teaching and partly through that of Tāntric worship, we find the more erotic side becoming prominent, and his followers indulged in practices which he himself condemned.

It would be unfair to pass from the ethical side of the teaching of Chaitanya without reference to another aspect of his teaching and practice. His gospel of salvation through devotion was addressed to all sorts and conditions of men and women. He preached the doctrine of the brotherhood of men, and in theory recognized no distinction of caste, though he himself followed its social rules. To this day groups of his followers live the monastic life, admitting into their fellowship men and women of all castes.

What may be called Rādhāism reached its most degraded expression in the practice of a sect known as the Sākhībhāvas, a small sect, the members of which seek in ways that are too

[1] Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, *Śaivism*, *&c.*, p. 85.

disgusting for description to attain to the position of companions of Rādhā.

In the doctrines of these sects there is comparatively little positive moral teaching. From the ethical point of view their interest lies rather in the implications which a non-moral doctrine of God may have when it is connected with legendary elements such as were introduced when Rādhā was placed in such a relationship to the Supreme object of worship. The most immoral consequences were reached as interest came to be increasingly centred in Rādhā, and the worshipper sought to have reproduced in himself the experience of the God which she possessed.

We pass from these to other Vaishṇavite sects in which we see the operation of much healthier influences. The influence of Rāmānanda, a religious teacher, born probably about the beginning of the fifteenth century, had great strength and persistence. He sought through the use of the vernacular to bring religion down to the common people, and the message which he preached was addressed to all irrespective of caste. All that was needful was devotion. But, perhaps, most important of all was the new content which devotion received when turned, as it was by him, from Kṛishṇa and Rādhā to Rāma and Sītā, the worship of whom was free from the impure admixtures which had come to characterize the devotion of several of the other sects.

Rāmānanda was in the direct line of succession from Rāmānuja, but his influence was far less philosophical than personal. He gathered around him disciples from various castes, even from among the outcastes. One of them was a woman, and the greatest of all, Kabīr, is said to have been a Mohammedan.

In Kabīr we have one of the loftiest and purest influences in the whole history of Indian religion. He was a thinker, though not of the first order, and he lays down a definite theory of the origin and nature of the Universe. The Supreme Soul and the individual soul he holds to be essentially distinct

from each other, for God created individual souls not from His own substance but from a subtle entity distinct from Him. These individuals are 'of one blood and are one life'.[1] Distinctions of caste have, therefore, no justification. The precept of the Upanishads, 'thou art that', means not that there is no distinction between individual souls and the Supreme Soul, but that the individual soul is one with the subtle element from which all individual souls were developed. He condemns the various forms of religious practice which he believes to be the outcome of false views of God. Rites and ceremonies serve only to generate pride in the heart of the worshipper, and fail to lead him to God.

> The soul is to the mind as a monkey is to a showman. Making it dance in a variety of ways, it (mind) finally retains it in its own hands.[2]

It is a vain endeavour through which men seek to realize their oneness with God.

> In this world all have passed away considering themselves to be Rāma, but no one actually became Rāma.[3]

The root of all trouble lies in egotism or self-pride, and release from it can come only through devotion going forth to meet the grace of Rāma. He is the source of all that is good, and without him nothing is good.

> If you endeavour to acquire one thing (God), every other thing will come to you; but if you endeavour to acquire every other thing, that one thing will be lost.[4]

We have in all this a remarkably clear perception of the inwardness of true religion, and of the determinative character of the relationship of the individual to God in the whole range of experience. There is but little appreciation of the great positive tasks that confront men in a world where they are thrown together in such varied relations, but there is a very clear apprehension of the fact that in the highest human

[1] Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, &c.*, p. 70.
[2] Trans. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, &c.*, p. 72.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 72.
[4] *Ib.*, p. 73.

activity freedom from egotism and self-seeking is of fundamental importance. And if there be but little in the way of a social philosophy, it is much that there should be a repudiation of those arbitrary distinctions that in India have kept man apart from man. In all Indian literature we have no clearer expressions of the unreality of these distinctions than in the writings of Kabīr.

> It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be;
> The barber has sought God, the washer-woman, and the carpenter.
> Even Raidās was a seeker after God.
> The Ṛishi Śwāpacha was a tanner by caste.
> Hindus and Moslems alike have achieved that End, where remains no mark of distinction.[1]

We shall not attempt to give any account of the numerous other leaders who inculcated the worship of Rāma, or of the sects which they founded. But mention should be made of Tulasīdās, the author of the Hindī Rāmāyaṇa, which has so deeply influenced the minds of the common people of Northern India since the time of its appearance in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The details of his philosophical teaching need not detain us. It is sufficient to draw attention to the strongly ethical character of his religious teaching. The supreme fruit of devotion to Rāma is deliverance from sin and purification of the heart. And sin is conceived not in the external and ritualistic manner in which we have so frequently seen it regarded, but as spiritual impurity which separates the soul from God. Such sins are covetousness, infatuation, intoxication, and lust. The grace of Rāma, which is found through *bhakti*, destroys sin and confers the power of distinguishing good and evil. The deliverance which he gives does not express itself in transcendence of good and evil, but it becomes possible to the soul in which dwell forgiveness, devotion, knowledge, and compassion.

In the Marāṭhā country there has been in process for many centuries a Vaishṇavite movement which has deeply influenced

[1] Tagore, *One Hundred Poems of Kabīr*, II.

the life particularly of the common people. It is associated with Krishṇa, known as Viṭhobā, and his consort Rukmiṇī. Round these a great wealth of legend has gathered. The sports of Krishṇa find a place in their legendary lore, but it is a place far less determinative than in the religion of the sects of Vallabha or Chaitanya. The most outstanding leaders in this movement were Nāmdev and Tukārām. Both belonged to the lower orders of Hindu society, the former being a tailor (born 1270), and the latter a shop-keeper (born 1608). In both there was the same ardent devotion to Viṭhobā, and the same sense that his worship expresses itself in purity of life. Nāmdev shows the same contempt as the later Northern poets for pilgrimages and all the other external means through which deliverance was so commonly sought, as well as for austerities and meditation.

> Your mind is full of vices. What is the use of the pilgrimages you make? What is the use of austere practices, if there is no repentance? The sins resulting from a mental act cannot be effaced by the highest holy place.[1]

The way of deliverance is through devotion to God accompanied by that purity of conduct, which it in turn reinforces. It is especially in absence of pride, self-surrender, and humility that this purity of heart expresses itself.

> Firmly grasp the truth which is Nārāyaṇa. Purity of conduct should not be abandoned; one should not be afraid of the censure of people and thus accomplish one's own purpose. Surrender yourself to your loving friend (God), giving up all ostentation and pride.[2]
>
> The two, desire and anger, he has thrown out, and cherishes in his heart (lit. house) quietude and forgiveness.[3]

In Tukārām there was an even more tender religious strain. His mind was absorbed in devotion to God, and he forsook all, giving himself to the singing of his praises. He was not a systematic thinker, and there is considerable confusion in his

[1] Trans. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, *Śaiviṣm*, *&c.*, p. 90.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 91.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 91.

thought. At times he gives utterance to expressions which, taken by themselves, would give ground for regarding him as a monist of the school of Śaṅkarāchārya. But elsewhere he attacks this philosophy as inconsistent with his doctrine of *bhakti*. We must regard him as a religious guide, not as an exponent of a philosophy, and one cannot fail to be impressed by his presentation of the spiritual character of true devotion. It is only the pure in heart who can see God.

> When the auspicious juncture of Siṁhastha comes, it brings fortune only to barbers and priests. There are crores of sins in the heart, but externally a man shaves the hair on the head and the beard. What has been shaved off has disappeared. Tell me what else has changed. The vicious habits are not changed, which might be regarded as a mark of the destruction of sins; says Tukā, without devotion and faith everything else is useless trouble.[1]

A single passage will serve to show how he conceives the character of the saint:

> Such are the saints who meet us on this path that the fetter of the world is broken at the sight of them; they are ever filled with the joy of true mind and true being: we shall honour them as hallowed sources of liberation. Faith is their all-sufficing principle: nothing breaks their repose: they crush the spirit of infidelity. By their mercy to all creatures they destroy the root of hatred: they treat all as brothers—friend, foe, or child of their own. Purify your mind, body, and speech: beholding his form everywhere, salute it. Be humble with your whole heart, renouncing all presumptuous pride. Be not greedy of gain, nor scrupulous about honour: desire and love are false. One who knows all, yet keeps as still as though he knew nothing, such a one the saints come suddenly to visit. Be truly faithful, and toil not after wealth, then the saints will ever visit you. Thus says Tukā, sick of pride of learning.[2]

We have chosen but a few of the most outstanding representatives of the Vaishṇava *Bhakti* movement, and have touched but lightly on their teaching and spirit. But what has been said will perhaps be sufficient to give some indication of

[1] Trans. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, &c.*, p. 94.
[2] Trans. Fraser and Marathe, *The Poems of Tukārām*, p. 288.

the variety of ways in which the spirit of devotion has been related to ethical life and thought. The one feature common to all is the belief in the *bhakti-mārga*, as opposed to the *karma-mārga* and the *jñāna-mārga*, as the way of deliverance. This way has been found compatible with an elaborate ritualism, as among the Vallabhas, and with an almost complete absence of ritualism, as in Tukārām, with idolatry as in Tukārām, and with repudiation of idolatry, as in Kabīr. It has also been associated with much variety of ethical teaching. We have, at the one pole, a devotion which is non-moral, leading in certain of its expressions to immoral conduct. At the other pole, we have a devotion which is inseparably connected with purity of moral character. These differences are to be traced directly to differences in the character of the legendary material which has gathered round the various cults. But this legendary material is, again, the instrument for the expression of certain ideas regarding God, which have the most profound significance for life. For when we speak of the ideas regarding God which have entered into the philosophical thought or the religious practice of men, whether these ideas have been presented abstractly or in legendary or mythological garb, we are dealing with ideas that have been formed of the nature of the Universe within which we live and act. The legends regarding the sports of Kṛishṇa are the expression of a view of the Universe that fails to see moral ideals in their true position in it. In saying this we must not be supposed to be using the term moral in the restricted sense which the eroticism of the tales might suggest. The case has far wider implications than that. The question is, partly, whether the Universe is rationally constituted, or whether the element of caprice can enter into it. It is a larger question than that, for the Universe might conceivably be law-ordered and yet not be morally constituted in the strict sense; but this is one of the implications of the question. Looked at simply from this point of view, the tales of Kṛishṇa are the expression in popular form of an irrational view of the Universe, which does

not make provision for an ordered morality. On the other hand, if we turn to the stuff of which the Universe is constituted, as distinct from its form, we find in it elements that are equally inconsistent with a satisfactory morality. At the heart of it there is a place for licence, deceit, and trickery, and all this has its inevitable reflection in the lives of those who place their confidence in it.

This is the rationale of what in the language of religion would be expressed in somewhat different terms. If the end of religion be the attainment of some sort of relationship with God, whatever the nature of that relationship may be, it is a matter of supreme importance how God is conceived. If God be pictured as holy, just, and righteous, we have the ground for one kind of life in His worshippers. If He be pictured as moved by the passions and weaknesses of mortals, we have the ground for another. The moral consequences are greatest when it is a relation of fellowship with Him that is sought. The ideals that govern human life will be drawn from the conception that is held of the life of God Himself, and the relation formed with Him will be determined in its nature by what is believed to be His character and attitude to men.

All this is very relevant to the case of certain of the forms of Vaishṇavism which we have considered. The same principles might be applied to the case of many Śaivite cults, into which the sexual element enters even more strongly, especially of the Śāktas, into whose worship there enter practices of the most debasing kind. But this part of the subject need not be further developed. It is sufficient to have drawn attention to a line of popular religion that has tended to the degrading of morality, and to have indicated in a general way the root of the evil.

The more worthy ethical teaching of religious leaders like Kabīr, Tulasīdās, Nāmdev, and Tukārām is the outcome of loftier conceptions of God and of the nature of the relationship of the individual with Him. His character is not in all cases

fully ethicized, and the immoral legendary element has not been entirely excluded. But a far purer conception has been formed of the nature of His love and of the manner of the operation of His grace. But the blight of passivism remains. God has been thought of in a way that has served to dissolve the artificial divisions that a false philosophy erected or defended between man and man or between class and class. We are brought even, as in Tukārām, to the thought of the brotherhood of man. But this thought failed to furnish the motive for an active, strenuous social morality. It did little more than move men to abstain from injury. It was realized that the infliction of injury on living beings was incompatible with the nature of God, and that pride and selfishness were incompatible with a life of devotion to Him, but it was not fully realized that God might have purposes which could be served by active endeavour for the good of others, or that there was a self-assertiveness which was not selfish and a sense of the worth of personality which was not pride, or that there was possible an activity in the world which was not worldly. This is a line of argument which it is possible, of course, to press too strongly. The fountains of human sympathy have never been so dry that men have completely failed to serve each other, and there have not been lacking injunctions to such service. But the weakness which has been indicated besets much even of what is best in the ethical teaching of the great exponents of *bhakti*.

CHAPTER VI

ETHICAL TENDENCIES IN MODERN HINDU THOUGHT

THE ethical thought which we have been considering throughout the course of this study has been conducted, in the greatest part of it at least, in view of a social order of a fixed and stable character. It is chiefly on this account that the more fundamental problems of ethics obtruded themselves with but little insistence on the minds of thinkers. There is no need to probe into the foundations of an order which is believed to be divine. But in modern times thoughtful men have been compelled to face problems that lie very near the foundations of the moral and social life. They have been driven to this by the compelling force of circumstances.

Western thought and practice have inevitably exercised a profound influence on the thought and practice of the people of India. It is possible to exaggerate in writing on such a subject, but it is no exaggeration to say that contact with the West, particularly in the forms which this contact has taken during the past century, has had the effect of giving a new direction to the interests and aspirations of large numbers who belong to the educated classes in India. The Hindus throughout their long history have been brought into contact with more than one alien civilization, and this contact has not been without its results. But the results have not usually taken the form of a profound modification of social or moral ideals. Hinduism has always been more than Catholic, and it has shown a wonderful capacity for assimilating ideas and practices of diverse and seemingly incompatible kinds. It has been likened to an old rambling building to the original fabric of which additions have constantly been made, and to which

further additions may be made indefinitely. But amid all changes the main structure has stood, and none of the influences brought to bear on it in ancient times was powerful to shake its foundations. At one time it seemed that Buddhism would do so, but that influence led to no fundamental reconstruction. Even Mahommedanism, which has been so long and so firmly established in India, has exercised comparatively little influence on Hinduism itself. It has drawn converts in large numbers from Hinduism, but it has not led to any profound modification of the fabric of Hindu thought and practice.

It may be said that it is too early to speak with any confidence of the effects of modern European influence. India has bowed low before many another blast, and it may reasonably be held that the Western influences which have touched it during the past century have done so only superficially. Such a contention cannot be dogmatically rejected, but on the other hand it may be pointed out that in modern times the whole world has become so unified that it seems likely to be difficult for any people to withdraw itself from the operation of influences which are at work in the wider world. We are therefore justified in assuming that the modifications which have taken place in the outlook of so many Hindus in modern times are not the expression of merely passing modes of thought, but that they are the effect of the operation of influences which are bound to continue to operate, whatever changes may take place in the political relation of India to the nations of the West. For India can never withdraw herself from the cultural influences which are at work throughout the world.

The influence of the West has been making itself felt in various ways. There is first of all that influence which has come from the side of religion. The religion which the Westerner has brought with him is a universal religion, while that of the Hindu is national. Mahommedanism also is a universal religion, and its impact on Hinduism has been no less strong than that of Christianity, or, to put it more accurately

it has been no less potent as an influence in detaching Hindus from their allegiance to their ancient faith. Indeed in this respect it has been incomparably more powerful. But Christianity has influenced the minds of many who have not been brought within its fold in a way that Mahommedanism has never done. There have been certain great religious figures, the most notable of whom was Kabīr, in whom we see the blending of elements taken from the Hindu and Mahommedan religions, but the meeting of the adherents of the two religions has not usually led to such results. The fact is that Mahommedanism came to India as an alien force, inseparably associated with the hostile peoples who professed it. It might be said that the circumstances under which Christianity was brought to India were not essentially different. As a matter of fact there were few points of similarity, except that both were the religions professed by conquering peoples. And there are elements in the Christian message which have made an appeal to the intelligences and consciences of the people of India which Mahommedanism could not make. In particular much of the ethical teaching of the Gospels has found warm appreciation. And it has been possible for Hindus to appeal from the practice of professing Christians to their principles, as it has not been possible to do with Mahommedans, at any rate so effectively. We have found reason to believe that there is a profound difference between the standpoints of the Christian and the Hindu ethic; yet many Hindus have found much in Christian teaching by which they have sought to enrich and reinforce their own ethic.

Another powerful set of influences has come along the lines of science, literature, and what, for want of a better term, we may call culture. The social institutions of the West, its active philanthropy and the organizations which have been set up for giving effect to it, have deeply impressed the minds of many of the most earnest and intelligent Hindus. And, in spite of much that is unworthy in the ideals of life presented in European literature, they have found revealed in it ways of life in

many ways freer and more satisfying than orthodox Hinduism has provided. Take all this in conjunction with the discoveries and inventions which we owe to modern science, the fruits of which have been made available to the people of India, and some idea may be formed of the extent of the revolution which is being wrought through the contact of the East with the West. Even holy men have appreciated inventions which have made it possible for them to travel in the course of a few days from one end of India to the other, and temple courts have rejoiced in the clear light furnished by electricity. Caste and caste, race and race have been thrown together to an extent that in ancient times would have been impossible. Ancient Hindu explanations of the phenomena of nature have had to give way before the explanations of modern science, and the scientific study of history, economics, and politics has wrought great changes on the outlook of the educated classes, while the new science of sociology has served to shed new light on their ancient social institutions.

These are but a few of the ways in which the life and thought of the West have been leaving their mark on India. There are some who stigmatize these influences as materialistic, to whom even the work of social amelioration seems to be wrongly directed. Again there are many whose devotion to the forms of Hinduism has remained unimpaired but who have forsaken its spirit; who have gladly taken from the West what it has to offer in the way of means to the attainment of material prosperity but have rejected its higher ideals. But there are others, as has already been indicated, who have been impressed by the characteristic ethic of the West, especially as they have seen it expressed in the lives of devoted men and women. The treasures of Western thought and invention may attract men for no higher reason than that they furnish the means for the acquisition of many things good for the body. But the appreciation which certain forms of conduct and certain virtues more characteristic of the West than of the East have found in India is an appreciation of something that is believed to be good

simply because it is good. To such the influence of the West has not been materializing but spiritualizing, opening the way to a higher spirituality than Hinduism could provide, furnishing the spiritual life with a richer content; for they have come to see that the service of God finds at least part of its expression in the service of man, and that the resources of modern discovery and invention may be used in this service.

It will not be difficult for those who have studied the various phases of Hindu ethical thought set forth in the foregoing chapters to realize the extent of the revolution which this implies—that among a people dominated by ideals which hardly leave any room for belief in the possibility of turning the present world to account, there should come to be appreciated and practised forms of activity, the object of which is the betterment of conditions in this world; that among people who have thought of the highest life as that of the ascetic who has disowned all social ties there should be developed respect and admiration for those who, claiming all men as their brothers, give themselves in self-sacrificing service to the lowest and most degraded.

So far, however, we have been dealing only in a general way with the manifestations of the new spirit in India—with the way in which it is manifesting itself practically. Another question has more importance from the point of view of the present study: What are thoughtful men saying and writing regarding the theory of morality? It may be said at the outset that modern India has not so far produced any great philosophical thinker who has sought to re-interpret the great problems of being, knowing, and doing in the light of the new conditions. It is perhaps too early for such an attempt to be made. There are, however, many who are deeply versed in the philosophy of the West, and who are prepared to discuss the problems of philosophy and ethics with Western thinkers on equal terms. But even among these there are not many who have made any thorough effort to relate Hindu and Western thought. It is easier for the average Hindu than for

most to conduct his thinking on any given range of questions within a closed compartment. And so we often find men who in their practice have not broken with Hinduism, but who in their ethical thinking follow lines laid down by philosophers of the West. We cannot, of course, lay this as a charge against all the most scholarly minds of India, or even against a large proportion of them. There are many who have sought to make consistent their thinking about the deepest problems of experience, and who have the courage to conform their practice to their theory. There are some who, without breaking completely with their Hindu social organization, have been prepared fearlessly to follow the truth wherever it might lead them, and who have refused to be deflected from their course by the threatenings of orthodoxy. There are others who have broken with Hindu society and have found a home in the society of the Christian Church or of one of the reformed religious bodies which in the past century have sprung up in India. But still there are many among the rank and file of the educated classes who are prepared to expound and defend theories of morals which are at variance with the principles on which they act. And thoughtful Hindus confess to us at times that they feel that the Hindu and the Western thinker look at these problems from points of view that are poles apart, that they can place themselves at one or the other at will, but that they are unable to find any higher standpoint from which they can survey the situation of which they have had views in many ways so inconsistent. This is a fact, however, the main interest of which is psychological. It represents a passing phase, for people will not continue indefinitely to work with inconsistent conceptions.

Before we pass on to consider some of the ways in which Hindus have been trying to formulate a clearer and more consistent philosophy of life, it may be of interest to mention briefly a phase of thought to which expression is frequently given by popular writers and speakers. It is frequently stated that the main lines of Hindu social and ethical practice are

sound, but that it is necessary at the same time for the people of India to emulate the progressiveness of the West. This is sometimes put in extreme forms. For example, we have heard addresses in which the Vedānta of Śaṅkarāchārya was extolled as the greatest and truest of all philosophies, the spirit of militarism commended, and the duty of social service, particularly in the work of raising the depressed classes, inculcated. It would be unfair to take as illustrations of serious tendencies of Hindu thought statements at which all clear-thinking Hindus would scoff. They are mentioned here only because we believe we can see in them evidence of a strong tendency among the educated classes to maintain the ancient thought and customs of Hinduism inviolate, but to add to them something, they know not what, which shall help to bring India into line with the more progressive nations of the West.

Efforts of a more systematic kind have been made by individuals and societies to bring Hindu thought into line with the ideals that have inspired the best life of the modern world. The impulse has usually come from the side of religion, and the most common form which it has taken has been the endeavour to re-interpret ancient Hindu thought as expressed in the Scriptures.

One of the most notable movements in modern times has been that represented by the Brāhma Samāj, which originated in Bengal but which has branches in many parts of India, and by the Prārthanā Samāj, which stands for similar principles in Bombay. The Brāhma Samāj was in its inception an eclectic movement, and its original founder, Rāja Rammohan Roy (1772–1833), acknowledged his deep indebtedness to the Christian Scriptures. He declared that he found the doctrine of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which had come to his knowledge. And it is significant of his breach with traditional Hinduism that he departed entirely from the doctrines of *karma* and transmigration. But from the time of Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) there have been some who

have followed an ethical theism which lays claim to a purely Hindu origin. It has been maintained that the speculative basis of Hinduism has been much misunderstood; that its pantheistic character and non-moral implications have been greatly exaggerated; that it does not support the anti-social and predominantly passive ideals which it has been so generally supposed to justify. It is not maintained that it furnishes no ground for the ideals that have found so wide acceptance in India, but what is urged is that there are other elements in it that have been too little regarded. Debendranath and his associates before the middle of last century discovered a new rule of life, based on the ancient writings, which they declined however to accept as infallible guides, placing Reason and Conscience in the position of supreme authority. Debendranath set forth his religious and ethical teaching in a work entitled the *Brāhma Dharma Grantha,* a manual intended for the members of the Brāhma Samāj. The first part of the book is devotional, and it is a compilation from the Upanishads. The second part contains his moral teaching, and it is compiled from *Manu*, *Yājñavalkya*, the *Mahābhārata*, and other Hindu Scriptures. He rejected the monistic interpretation of the Upanishads given by Śaṅkarāchārya, and offered a theistic interpretation, which he held to express the true spirit of ancient Hinduism. So, in the *Brāhma Dharma Grantha* he teaches that the One Supreme is 'the God of truth, infinite wisdom, goodness and power, Eternal and All-pervading, the One without a second'. In this we are a long way from the 'neti, neti', of the Upanishads. It is in His worship that salvation lies, and this worship consists in 'loving Him and doing that which He loveth'.[1] In his writings and sermons Debendranath laid great emphasis on moral duties, and there are passages which might almost have come from the practical part of one of the Pauline epistles. Take, for example, two paragraphs from his 'Farewell Offering':

Let only that be done which promoteth well-being. Do no evil to an

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 6.

evil-doer. If any should work unrighteousness, it should not be requited by unrighteousness. Always be righteous. Evil should be overcome by good, and unrighteousness by righteousness.

Contend with no one. Restrain anger; and, imbued with love and charity, behave justly to all. Let love be your rule of conduct with regard to others.[1]

It has to be remembered that Debendranath's interest in the great questions of religion and life was the outcome of an impulse not primarily speculative but practical. He did not profess himself a philosopher, and he did not address himself to philosophic minds. But, believing profoundly that the heart of the ancient Hindu religion was sound, he desired that his fellow-countrymen should share in what was best in its life. It would therefore be unfair to criticize his teaching as if it formed a philosophical system. It is sufficient if we here emphasize the fact, which has had so important practical implications, that Debendranath believed that he had been able to find in the Hindu sacred writings the principles of an ethical theism, so that he could teach that God is holy, that the universe is morally constituted, and that His worship finds part of its expression in ethical activity within society.

The traditions of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj, Debendranath's branch of the Samāj, have been maintained by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, who shares his father's deep devotion to the Hindu sacred writings. His mind from childhood has been steeped in what is best in the ancient thought of India, and at the same time he is versed in the literature of the West, and fully appreciates the culture which it represents. He does not profess himself an adherent of any of the philosophical schools, but the influence of Vedāntist thought is more marked in him than in his father. But he shares his father's strong ethical sense, and he joins with him in commending an active morality in which the directing principle is love, a love towards God, which includes in its embrace not only the world of men but nature.

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 292.

Dr. Rabindranath's philosophy of life finds expression in all his numerous works, but it is in his *Sādhanā* that he gives most definite and systematic form to his religious and ethical views. These views have been so widely studied that it is desirable that we should give some brief space to a consideration of those of them which have an immediate bearing on the ethical problem.

There is, first of all, his conception of the relationship of the soul with God. In the ancient Scriptures there are two main ways in which this relationship is conceived. They may be thought of as distinct, but it may be possible for a relation of union between them to be established. On the other hand, they may be thought of as already one, and the realization of this unity on the part of the soul may be possible. There is a world of difference between these two conceptions of the relationship of the soul with God. Now Dr. Rabindranath clearly teaches that the goal for man is the realization or attainment of unity with God.

> Though the West has accepted as its teacher Him who boldly proclaimed His oneness with His Father, and who exhorted His followers to be perfect as God, it has never been reconciled to this idea of our unity with the infinite being. It condemns as a piece of blasphemy any implication of man's becoming God. . . . Yes, we must become Brahma. We must not shrink from avowing this. Our existence is meaningless if we never can expect to realize the highest perfection that there is.[1]

The doctrine that is here set forth can really be made consistent with what he teaches regarding love towards God only through ambiguities of language. The crown of love is 'at-one-ness', not 'one-ness', with the beloved. Dr. Rabindranath speaks as if the two terms were interchangeable, while they are really different and have very different implications, as may be found from a study of Hindu thought. Realization of oneness would mark, not the consummation, but the annihilation of love, for love can exist only between two beings. It may be

[1] *Sādhanā*, p. 154.

remarked in passing that it is here that so much of Hindu mysticism differs *toto caelo* from distinctively Christian mysticism. The one aims at realization of unity, the other at attainment of union.

The same confusion is latent in the ethical teaching which is connected with this doctrine. He condemns the spirit of the West that sets out to subdue Nature as if it were something foreign, saying that India has put all her emphasis on the harmony that exists between the individual and the universal. The appearance of disharmony is alleged to be the outcome of *avidyā*, of ignorance. This is undoubtedly true as a statement of the most widely accepted Hindu belief. And we have as a matter of fact in India the spectacle of countless individuals seeking to overcome this *avidyā* through meditation, aided by various forms of ascetic practice. It is not quite easy to ascertain what the attitude of Dr. Rabindranath to this subject is. He seems in places to approve the ideal of the *sannyāsī*,[1] and he certainly commends the spirit of renunciation.

> We see everywhere in the history of man that the spirit of renunciation is the deepest reality of the human soul.[2]

And he finds this spirit manifested by the saints of Buddhism and of Hinduism. But at the same time he maintains that attainment is through love, and from the use of this term further confusion arises. Love is a term having more than one connotation, and much trouble has arisen from the ambiguities that it covers. When it is said, for example, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', it is not a mere emotional experience that is enjoined. It is primarily the seeking for others of those goods that we seek for ourselves. In the annals of Hindu saints it would be difficult to find evidence of much active effort, steadily sustained, for the good of others. Dr. Rabindranath himself commends the Bengali ascetic, who in answer to his question why he did not preach

[1] *Sādhanā*, pp. 32, 33. [2] *Ib.*, p. 151.

his doctrine to all the people of the world, said: 'Whoever feels thirsty will of himself come to the river'.[1] If there be love here, it is certainly not a love which leads to a social ethic.

But he goes beyond this and proclaims the doctrine of realization through action.

> The more man acts and makes actual what was latent in him, the nearer does he bring the distant Yet-to-be.[2]

But our difficulty is as to the content of what is latent in him. There is much both good and bad latent in us, and the teaching which we are considering derives much of its plausibility in the Western world from the fact that there are moral distinctions already formed to which appeal can be made. Dr. Rabindranath himself supplies us with no principle by reference to which these distinctions may be discovered. Nor does orthodox Hindu thought. It is not sufficient to speak of realizing the harmony of the self with the Universe in feeling and action. It might reasonably be claimed that the American settler who sets out to 'subdue nature' is realizing this harmony in as real a sense as any other agent, for the phrase 'subduing nature' is a popular and misleading one, nature being in truth unsubduable. Nor is our difficulty met by anything that is said of the need of freeing ourselves from the bonds of personal desires. For that only raises the question: What are personal desires? Here again no principle is given by which we may be helped to an answer, and we are not carried much farther on by language regarding the need of being saved from the grasp of the self that imprisons us, or the foolishness of the man who considers the separateness of self as his most sacred possession. The thorough-going Vedāntist is more logical, when, renouncing action, he turns in contemplation within the self, seeking the 'self within the heart'. It may be remarked in conclusion that the work of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, presented as it is in such exquisite literary

[1] *Sādhanā*, p. 33. [2] *Ib.*, p. 120.

form, and manifesting a spirit so noble and devout, yet serves to show how impossible is the task of attempting the presentation of an ethic resting even on what is best in Hindu thought until the foundations have been more thoroughly examined and tested.

The activities of some of the foremost leaders of modern thought in India have been connected with the Brāhma Samāj in its different branches. We pass these by, for in so far as they have dealt with ethical questions, their teaching has generally rested on an eclectic foundation. They profess not to represent the true Hindu tradition, but to accept truth from all scriptures and from the teaching of all persons without distinction of creed or country. In practice they follow a morality which is largely Christian, and some of their members in their writings even go beyond many Christians in their insistence on Christian ethical principle.

There have been in modern times other movements which are full of interest for the student of Hindu ethics. One of the most remarkable is the Ārya Samāj, a movement essentially conservative in its character, in connexion with which there has been provided a re-interpretation of the fundamentals of Hindu thought, the object of which has been the modification of practical life in such a way that the people of India may be fitted to stand alongside the more progressive nations of the West. Dayānanda Sarasvatī (1824–1883), the founder of the Samāj, received no English education, and the knowledge which he came to possess of Western thought and culture he acquired indirectly. From his earliest days he was a bold and adventurous spirit, dissatisfied with many things in the life of his own people. His biographer, Lāla Lājpat Rai, has well described this dissatisfaction:

> He saw that the best of the Hindus had cultivated a morbid and ridiculous desire for peace; that instead of fighting the passions and lower instincts and leading the way by their successes, they were flying from them out of sheer cowardice. He was for conquest, and he wished a guide, a friend and a teacher who would by practice as well as precept

show him the way. . . . He wished to imitate nature, which was ever active, ever vigilant, ever conquering, even amid scenes that impressed the superficial observer with the peace of death and the calm of inactivity.[1]

In particular he revolted against what he believed to be the falsehoods of the Puranic faith.

We need not follow him through the stages by which he was led to the conclusions that were to become the foundation principles of the Ārya Samāj. It will be sufficient if we here indicate those principles which were most closely implicated in his ethical teaching. Dayānanda professed to take his stand on the Vedas, but he declared that their teaching had been misrepresented in the traditional interpretations. He maintained that the religion of the Vedas and Upanishads was a simple, spiritual monotheism, not 'an affair of temples and material sacrifices, of shows and processions, of festivals spread over the whole year in honour of innumerable deities'.[2] He denounced the institution of caste as resting simply on birth, maintaining that caste distinctions rested properly on character:

Āryas are men of exalted principle, and Dasyus those who lead a life of wickedness and sin.[3]

He traced the corruption of Hindu religion to the priestly pretensions of men who were Brāhmans merely by descent and not in the more real spiritual sense. Assuming the rôle of a Protestant Reformer, he inveighed against sacerdotalism and the restrictions which it had put on the privilege of Vedic study, declaring that the Vedas, the infallible Word of God, are an open book which all may study. He supplied, however, his own principles of interpretation, which it would be difficult for most unbiased scholars to accept, and he himself made a translation of the Vedas which has been characterized by his biographer as the best and most scholarly translation so far

[1] *The Ārya Samāj*, p. 24.
[2] Quoted, Lājpat Rai, *The Ārya Samāj*, p. 69. [3] *Ib.*, p. 88.

given to the public,[1] but which has not impressed most European scholars in this way.[2]

In the *Sattyārth Prakāsh* he gives a summary of his beliefs. He prefaces this with a statement that his conception of God and all other objects in the Universe is founded on the teachings of the Veda and other true Śāstras, and is in conformity with the beliefs of all the sages from Brahmā down to Jaimini, and at the close of the preface he sets forth the character of the ideal man :

> He alone is entitled to be called a man who possesses a thoughtful nature and feels for others in the same way as he does for his own self, does not fear the unjust, however powerful, but fears the truly virtuous, however weak. Moreover, he should always exert himself to his utmost to protect the righteous, and advance their good, and conduct himself worthily towards them, even though they be extremely poor and weak and destitute of material resources. On the other hand, he should constantly strive to destroy, humble and oppose the wicked, sovereign rulers of the whole earth and men of great influence and power though they be. In other words, a man should, as far as lies in his power, constantly endeavour to undermine the power of the unjust and to strengthen that of the just. He may have to bear any amount of terrible suffering, he may have even to quaff the bitter cup of death in the performance of this duty, which devolves on him on account of being a man, but he should not shirk it.[3]

This passage will give some impression of the virility of the Hindu character as conceived by Dayānanda, and it will also help the reader to understand how the political aims of the Samāj have been suspect in certain quarters, justly or unjustly.

Fundamental in the teaching of Dayānanda as it is set forth in the *Sattyārth Prakāsh* is his conception of God, 'the Spirit who permeates the whole universe'. His nature, attributes, and characteristics are holy. He is omniscient, formless, all-pervading, unborn, infinite, almighty, just, and merciful.[4] To Him alone worship is due. God and the soul are distinct

[1] *The Ārya Samāj*, p. 98.
[2] See Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 117.
[3] *The Ārya Samāj*, p. 82.
[4] *Ib.*, p. 82.

entities, but they are related to each other as the pervader and the pervaded, as father and son. He gathers up the duty of man under the term *dharma*, which he defines as 'that which inculcates justice and equity, which teaches truthfulness of thought, speech and deed—in a word, that which is in conformity with the Will of God, as embodied in the Vedas.'[1] The last phrase leaves open a very wide door by which the non-ethical elements in *dharma* might find admission, were it not that Dayānanda throughout all his teaching gives such definite emphasis to the primacy of the ethical. *Adharma*, on the other hand, is that which is in antagonism to the will of God. He 'awards all souls the fruits of their deeds in strict accordance with the requirements of absolute justice'. 'God's creative energy must have play, and the souls must reap the fruits of their karma.' The possibility of the forgiveness of sins is denied. Yet it is stated that the soul 'is dependent on God's grace for the enjoyment of the fruit of its actions. God is free as well as just.'[2] The cause of the earthly bondage of the soul, and the source of sin, is ignorance. It leads man to worship things other than the Creator, and obscures his intellectual faculties, with the consequence that he is involved in pain and suffering. But it is not simply through intellectual enlightenment that the salvation of the soul is achieved—its deliverance from suffering and pain and its attainment of freedom. A rather unsystematic list of the means of salvation is given—'the worship of God or the contemplation of His nature and attributes with concentrated attention, the practice of virtue, the acquisition of true knowledge by the practice of *Brahmācharya*, the company of the wise and learned, the love of true knowledge, purity of thought, active benevolence, and so on.[3] Throughout his statement of beliefs it is noteworthy that the main emphasis is laid on their ethical and social side, and active moral effort directed to the social good of others is enjoined, as it is in the works of few other Hindus even of modern times.

[1] *The Arya Samāj*, p. 83. [2] *Ib.*, p. 89. [3] *Ib.*, p. 85.

> An energetic and active life is preferable to passive acquiescence in the decrees of fate, inasmuch as *destiny* is the consequence of *acts*. A life of virtuous activity will secure the soul a good *destiny*, as a life of wickedness will produce the opposite result. Hence, *acts* being the *makers* of destiny, virtuous activity is superior to passive resignation.[1]

It will doubtless be asked how all this is made consistent with the teaching of the ancient scriptures, which are still regarded as authoritative. Dayānanda overcomes this difficulty by rationalizing and ethicizing the old religious terminology, sometimes in most arbitrary ways. For example, he takes the term *Tīrtha*, repudiates its application to rivers and other so-called holy places, and defines it as 'that by means of which the sea of pain is crossed', consisting in certain moral actions.[2]

To the philosopher much of the teaching of the Ārya Samāj may seem puerile, and the mere statement of it may seem to be as effective as any refutation. But we are dealing in this work not merely with the profoundest expressions of Hindu thought, but with other expressions of it which have contributed to the shaping of the actual development of Hindu life. The principles of the Ārya Samāj have found wide acceptance, providing as they do a way of life which is in professed accordance with the ancient ideals of Hinduism, and at the same time makes possible the satisfaction of those active aspirations, which, through contact with a wider world, have been born in the hearts of so many of the people of India. We do not propose to subject those principles to any thorough criticism. Many others have pointed out the absurdity of the claim that is made for the infallibility of the Vedas, and the obvious unsoundness of the principles which Dayānanda has used in their interpretation. It has also been shown by others that many of his fundamental theological assumptions, precarious in themselves, have no justification in orthodox thought. For example, he posits the existence of three eternal beings—God, the Soul, and *Prakṛiti*, a position which, in the form in which he

[1] *The Ārya Samāj*, p. 87. [2] *Ib.*, p. 87.

presents it, is in keeping with the teaching of none of the philosophical schools, though evidently suggested by the Sāṁkhya and the Viśishṭādvaita. For the active and even violent practical principles that he lays down he provides no new foundation. The goal that he presents is 'the emancipation of the soul from pain and suffering of every description, and a subsequent career of freedom in the all-pervading God and His immense creation', to be obtained after successive re-births, directed by the principle of *karma*. Neither reason nor authority makes clear the relation of end to means.

We may here draw attention to an educational movement inspired by ideals of a national kind in some ways similar to those of the Ārya Samāj, the impulse in this case coming from the side of Theosophy. Some years ago the Board of Trustees of the Central Hindu College, Benares, issued a series of Text-books of Hindu Religion and Ethics for use in the institutions under its control. The purpose of the series is definitely stated:

> The object of the Central Hindu College being to combine Hindu religious and ethical training with the western education suited to the needs of the time, it is necessary that this religious and ethical training shall be of a wide, liberal and unsectarian character, while at the same time it shall be definitely and distinctively Hindu.

The principles of this educational propaganda are stated under three heads:

> 1. The Religious and Ethical instruction must be such as all Hindus can accept.
> 2. It must include the special teachings which mark out Hinduism from other religions.
> 3. It must not include the distinctive views of any special school or sect.[1]

The task that is here essayed might well appear to be a hopeless one, for it really amounts to the presentation of the highest common factor in Hindu religious and moral teaching as a philosophy of life. It is significant that the Six

[1] *An Advanced Text-Book*, Foreword,

Systems of Philosophy are represented as not in any way contradictory to each other, but as 'parts of a whole'.[1] The instruction offered is not of a scholarly character. Sanskrit texts are largely used, but the meaning which is put into them is frequently very different from that which their context justifies. Hindu ritual is explained away or interpreted ethically in a sense far remote from that which it had in the minds of those who in ancient times developed it and followed it. The attempt is made to relate the ethical part of the teaching to ethical theories advanced in the West, but it cannot be said that this is done with full intelligence. It is maintained that the arising of independent ethical schools in India, such as have arisen in the West, has been prevented by the harmony which exists between the commands of the *śruti* (revelation as given in the Vedic writings) and the dictates of reason,[2] the Hindu system of morality being founded on the 'recognition of the Unity of the Self'. The outcome of all this is a curious amalgam of ancient Hindu ideas, including *karma* and transmigration, with a social morality of a somewhat weakly sentimental character. The whole movement is significant only as showing the direction which the minds of many who are being educated in the colleges of modern India is taking; for this teaching has found much acceptance, particularly among the student class.

There have been many individuals in modern times who have in similar ways tried to combine ancient Hindu and modern Western ideals. They have often been sentimentalists rather than profound thinkers. A typical representative of this class was Swāmī Rām Tīrtha (1873–1906), a Panjābī Brāhman, who was first a student and later a lecturer on Mathematics in a Christian College. He assumed the yellow robe, and visited America, lecturing on Hindu religion and ethics. He professed to be an exponent of the Vedānta, and yet he believed that one of the chief needs of India was more active effort particularly along the lines of the development of

[1] *An Advanced Text-Book*, p. 36. [2] *Ib.*, p. 266.

her industrial and economic resources. He preached accordingly an 'asceticism' which should take the form not of withdrawal from the world, but of self-sacrificing labour for the amelioration of India's material conditions, and the practice of universal love and brotherhood. His works are a curious mixture of highly diluted Vedāntism and Christian thought, set forth in very emotional language. From the intellectual point of view they merit little consideration, for there is little originality or consistency in their teaching. For example, many of his verse effusions are very obvious parodies of Christian hymns. We have chosen him for mention only because he manifests in another way the tendency so common in India at the present time to seek a place for the ideals of material progress, which have had such far-reaching consequences in the activity of the West, within a system of thought essentially Hindu.

More thoroughgoing in his Vedāntism was Rāmakṛishṇa Paramahaṁsa (1834–1886), a Bengālī Brāhman, born of a priestly family. He was a man of strongly religious instinct, who found refuge in the Vedānta philosophy of Śaṅkarāchārya at the end of a spiritual pilgrimage extending over several years. His Vedantism was considerably modified, particularly on its practical side, by influences coming from other directions. His temperament was strongly emotional, and he was much influenced by Vaishṇava teaching regarding love towards God. The more tender side of the character of Jesus also made a strong appeal to him, and even Mahommedanism, into the devotional spirit of which he was initiated by a Mahommedan saint, contributed to the shaping of his character. But it was chiefly on the emotional side that the Christian and Mahommedan religions influenced him. They contributed but little to his intellectual position, which, in spite of his seeming electicism, remained essentially Vedāntist. God he held to be in his essence unknowable, yet manifested in everyone and in everything. In everything that happens God is expressed, in all conduct good and evil alike.

> God tells the thief to go and steal, and at the same time warns the householder against the thief.[1]

His principles led him in actual practice to bow in worship before the most degraded of moral outcastes as manifestations of God, and this practice he defends:

> When I look upon chaste women of respectable families, I see in them the Mother Divine arrayed in the garb of a chaste lady; and again, when I look upon the public women of the city, sitting in their open verandas, arrayed in the garb of immorality and shamelessness. I see in them also the Mother Divine, sporting in a different way.[2]

We are told also that his speech was at times abominably filthy. Max Müller seeks to explain this partly on the ground of a conventional attitude to sexual subjects different from ours in the West, but not necessarily immoral,[3] but it is difficult for us to take this view of a habit which undoubtedly shows the influence in his mind of the erotic side of Vaishṇavism in combination with Vedāntism.

It must not be supposed, however, that Rāmakṛishṇa resolved all moral distinctions. From one point of view moral distinctions have no validity, but from the point of view of the individual seeking to realize his unity with God there are hindrances to the realization of this unity.

> God is in all men, but all men are not in God; that is the reason why they suffer.[4]

This is a distinction familiar to the student of the Vedānta, and it opens up again all the practical questions arising out of that system of thought.

This line of thought was continued and defended by Rāmakṛishṇa's disciple, known to the world as Swāmī Vivekānanda (1862–1902). Starting from the position, held also by his master, that all religions are true, he developed an apologia for Hindu religion and Hindu civilization, the spiritual ideals of which he contrasted with the materialism of the West.

[1] Max Müller, *Rāmakṛishṇa*, p. 103.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 148.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 62.
[4] *Ib.*, p. 146.

Yet, with curious inconsistency, not uncommon in modern India, he advocated the adoption of Western methods with a view to bringing India into line with the more progressive nations of the West. His addresses made a great impression in America, but as an intellectual force he was much inferior to Rāmakṛishṇa. His presentation of the practical side of Vedānta teaching took even more startling forms. A passage in an address given by him at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 has been often quoted:

> Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye, divinities on earth, sinners? It is a sin to call a man so. It is a standing libel on human nature.
>
> Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep.

And another saying is to the same effect:

> You are not to be perfect, you are that already.

Enough has perhaps been said to show that the ethics of the Vedānta still have their exponents and defenders in modern India, who believe them capable of being adapted and applied to the conditions of modern life. Vivekānanda's influence still lives in India. Curiously enough, he is officially represented by the inhabitants of certain monasteries which he founded as centres of work for the advancement of India. But his spirit works less powerfully through these than it does, through his published lectures, in the minds of many young men of the educated classes, who have found in them comfortable instruction.

These are but some of the ways in which the minds of thinking people in modern India are working. We have confined ourselves to movements which are being carried on in some sense within Hinduism, and have refrained from going into detail regarding movements which have carried men away from Hinduism. It is still too early to say what the fate of these, or of other similar movements which may arise, will be. But it is certain that any ethical philosophy which is to satisfy the needs of India, however it be related to religion,

must be conceived in a wider spirit than the purely national. And it will be found as India comes more and more into the current of the life of the modern world that she needs something more to guide her than her ancient system of *dharma*, however interpreted; and, if her ancient systems of philosophy are to furnish the basis for a new ethical structure, they will be able to do so only if re-interpreted in a far more thorough way than has been done by thinkers up to the present.

BOOK III. THE WEIGHTIER ELEMENTS OF HINDU ETHICS

CHAPTER I

SOME OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF HINDU ETHICAL THOUGHT

OUR historical survey of Hindu ethics will have served to show how different in many ways the Hindu point of view is from that generally held by the modern European. The differences are greater than the casual observer usually realizes. Attention has been drawn by students of the history of ethical thought to the fact that there has been considerable variety of moral practice in different ages and in different lands; and this, apart altogether from those differences which are connected with conditions belonging to various levels of development. There are, for example, very marked differences between the Greek and the Christian ideas of virtue. To take but a single aspect of the case, much has been made of the Christian idea of humility in distinction to the qualities which Aristotle holds up to admiration in the magnanimous man. There are differences of opinion regarding moral ideals in the modern world. It is impossible for one to pass from one European country to another without being conscious of a difference in the moral atmosphere; and even within any given land different ideals are held by equally serious men. Among people of our own nation there are some who hold to what is called a Puritanical code of morals, while others, whose desire to lead the best life may be no less sincere, follow a code which their Puritan neighbours regard as dangerously lax. And these differences in many cases have behind them more

fundamental metaphysical or theological differences regarding the nature of reality, or the being or character of God. Yet amid all differences there is a remarkable amount of unanimity. Occasionally discussion waxes loud over some practical question, but even then it often happens that differences are found not to be really fundamental, and to be connected rather with the application of principles than with principles themselves.

This may be put in another way. Modern European thinkers have propounded various theories of the moral end. But the remarkable thing is that they have not usually questioned the validity of current ethical judgements except in matters of detail. Occasionally, indeed, there appears a thinker, like Nietzsche, who rejects our conventional moral standards and offers us a new morality. But more commonly moral philosophers have started from the assumption, avowed or implied, that conventional moral judgements are on the whole sound, and that where they are defective the explanation is to be found in lack of depth and precision of thought on the part of those who are the moral guides of society. Mill, for example, compares the accepted ethical code to the Nautical Almanac, regarding the business of the moralist, in one of its departments, as comparable to that of the astronomer who makes the calculations and pushes on to further inquiries.[1] Regarding the main lines of moral truth Mill and Kant would have been largely in agreement. Differences of opinion would have arisen, not so much regarding the forms of conduct which would have been held to be virtuous or vicious, as on the grounds on which moral judgements are based. It is surprising that thinkers belonging to various schools should have given so little attention to the problem that would confront them if an objector were to say, 'I deny the truth of your maxims and of the whole web of maxims to which they belong'. Kant would point the objector to the breach of rationality which such a position would involve, but this would not move the man who preferred to be irrational. Mill would

[1] *Utilitarianism*, chap. ii.

point to the loss of pleasure which would be involved to himself or to the sentient creation generally, but this would not move the man who refused to adopt the pleasure of all as his end.

The fact is that our modern European ethic—and in this it is at one with Greek ethics and the ethical tendency of Christianity in its most typical expressions—is an ethic of self-realization. We are not unmindful of schools like the Cynic and the Stoic, or of ascetic and quietistic tendencies which have shown themselves sometimes in extreme forms within the Christian Church, which might seem on the face of them to be expressions of a different spirit. It remains true that amid many differences of metaphysical standpoint there has persisted a sense of the worth of personality or, at any rate, of the worth of those ends in which the spirit of man seeks satisfaction. This is perhaps a somewhat vague statement, but it may be expressed more pointedly in this way, that the ideal of the West has been self-expression rather than self-repression. There have been many warring schools and factions, but the *casus belli* has usually been the relative place to be given to different elements in human nature. There have been few who have had the courage to maintain the position that the great expressions of the human spirit in science, art, and civilization generally are not its true expressions. And even when there has appeared in the West such a spirit of dissent, the ideal has nevertheless been the enriching of personality; it has not been held that man found his true end in mere privation.

Whatever may be thought of this line of argument, it can at least be maintained with full assurance that Hindu ethical thought and practice have rested on presuppositions of a different kind from those on which the ethical thought and practice of the West have rested. All down through the history of Hindu thought it has been almost taken for granted that individuality is a limitation, and that as such it is something that must be transcended. In the great systems of

philosophy this is taken as almost axiomatic, though there are differences in the explanations given of the illusion of individuality and the methods by which it is to be dispelled. We are not unmindful of Rāmānuja, or of other thinkers and religious leaders who have taught the doctrine of the reality of the soul not as essentially one with God, but as distinct from God and capable of entering into union with Him. The significance of such doctrines has already been discussed, and nothing that we have seen of them in their theoretical formulation or their practical expression serves to modify the general impression which we receive of the practical tendencies of Hindu thought. Without committing ourselves to any sweeping generalization, we may say that even with thinkers who have denied the illusoriness of personal existence, the end of man has been thought of as being in the silence. It has been characteristic of Hindu thought generally that the world of ordinary experience has been thought of as a barrier blocking the way to Reality. It is not conceived as in any way revealing the Real, which is to be found through negation of the phenomenal.

The reply is sometimes made that these conceptions are not distinctive of Hindu thought. Deussen in particular has sought to maintain the essential similarity of the solution of the philosophical problem given by the great thinkers of India and of the West. But in spite of all that may be said, the great thinkers of the West have held that there is a pathway to the Real through the phenomenal, and that there is a pathway to the goal of human attainment through the performance of the duties of 'the good neighbour and the honest citizen'. Hindu philosophy has its *Karma-kāṇḍa*, its system of works propaideutic to the *Jñāna-kāṇḍa*, but none of the great systems of thought contains anything that can properly be called a system of ethics. They represent the end as a form of being in which the ethical is simply transcended, and, what is more important, as standing in no vital relation to any discipline of a strictly ethical kind.

Let the case be stated bluntly. Those ideas which bulk so

largely in the Vedānta, and which find expression in other systems of philosophy, when logically applied, leave no room for ethics. Nevertheless, as has been already shown, if human life is to go on at all there are certain principles in accordance with which it must be carried on. This practical need is met by the system of *dharma*, in which guidance is given for human conduct in almost infinite detail. These details are to a large extent connected with ritual observance, and only to a limited extent are they of the nature of moral precepts. In so far as moral duties are inculcated, the details of the moral law are partly drawn from sources common to primitive morality generally, as in the case of the duties of hospitality to strangers, liberality, and such like; partly they are the outcome of the peculiar philosophical notions which had grown up, as in the case of the various ascetic disciplines. We cannot draw a sharp line of distinction between these two sources, for disciplines which later came to have a more strictly moral appearance were in some cases practised originally in the belief that they had magical efficacy. But the important thing for us to consider now is the fact that *dharma* has to do with a lower sphere of experience. It serves as a sort of platform over which one may climb to a position from which it becomes easier to reach the higher, but when this position has been reached it is no longer needed.

These ideas have filtered down into popular thought. It is not claimed that they have absolutely dominated it, but, to say the least, they have very widely and powerfully influenced it. This comes out nowhere more clearly than in the popular ideas of sainthood which bulk so largely in Hindu thought. Any one who has been brought into close contact with Hindu life can testify to this. The following incident recorded by Miss Cornelia Sorabji is typical:

> Of charity in its scriptural meaning I once had a talk with an orthodox old Hindu Sadhu. A friend, just arrived from England, was discussing with him through an interpreter what the Hindu called the 'big-little' things. In response to the Hindu's invitation to take my friend on

a pilgrimage, he was shown the Englishman's engagement book. The Holy man said that he who kept an engagement book could never attain to holiness. 'But', said the Englishman, 'my engagements are some of them in the service of my fellowmen. That is surely the way of holiness.' 'Yes,' said the Hindu, 'the very bottom-most step of the ladder.' 'What! then which is the highest?' 'Meditation—perfecting your individual self, losing it, in contemplation.' 'But while I am making my soul, sitting here meditating, my brother may be run over by a car in the street. Is not the higher work to go and rescue him?' 'Oh! no,' said the Hindu. 'That is for men who are beginning the way of holiness. Works are for those who need to buy.' Then he stopped, puzzled by his own philosophy. 'Or is the rescue of your brother God's work and not man's?' he said, and left it there.[1]

This suggests another point of view from which we may look at the case. According to our Western ways of thinking the ideal type of character is one which has been formed under conditions of strenuous activity. It is not the cloistered virtue that is praised so much as that which has come like pure molten gold out of the furnace of worldly trial. There have been those who have thought the virtue of the monastery or the convent the highest, no doubt. And it is significant that it is those Christian saints, who manifest and commend this kind of virtue, who of all Christian saints are most widely appreciated in India. Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* is probably the most popular Christian work in India. But most Christian people would agree that this type of sainthood expresses only in a very partial way the spirit of Christ. The place it has come to have at times in parts of the Christian Church may be explained partly by the fact that down through the history of Christianity there have been some who have thought of the Kingdom of God, erroneously, as a kingdom apart from all the activities with which men busy themselves in the world; partly by the fact that there have been those who have thought that for some there is a mission to sweeten the life of the world through the influence of lives lived apart from the hurry of its business. With those who hold this

[1] *Woman's Outlook in India*, vol. ii, p. 669.

latter point of view we have no reason to quarrel. But the well-known lines of Goethe express the mind of the West, and in this case also the mind of Christian people, regarding the moral life:

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.[1]

The Hindu ideal, as we have seen, is different from this. By widely sundered schools of thought the ideal man is believed to be he who has broken all worldly ties and who seeks a life of meditation apart from the haunts of men. There have been, it is true, especially in modern times, some who have felt that their true sphere was in the world. The call to service came to Debendranath Tagore while in retirement on the Himalayas: 'Give up thy pride and be lowly like this river. The truth thou hast gained, the devotion and trustfulness that thou hast learned here; go, make them known to the world.'[2] And like the river he descended from the mountains to water the arid plain. But this is not typical. The great religious teachers of India have not generally come down among men seeking to lift them up. Their gospel has not been a social one. The ideal life is not one that can be lived in the city, in the family, in the performance of the duties of everyday life. It is only rarely, as in parts of the *Bhagavadgītā*, that the belief has been held with any clearness that there is a way to salvation through the faithful performance of the duties of one's station. And even when it has been held, it has not been with that clearness that has enabled men to see a pathway to reality through the humblest duties of everyday life.

If all this has been made clear, it will be seen that the Hindu ethical position is a very curious one. There are in a way two standards, and their bearing on practical life presents problems that are full of difficulty. The duties of social life

[1] Talent is formed in the stillness, character in the rush of the world.
[2] *Autobiography*, p. 262.

cannot be deduced from the ultimate goal of attainment as the orthodox understand it, nor can they be shown to stand in any vital relation to it. *Dharma* is imposed by authority, and that is the end of it.

> Whatever law has been ordained for any (person) by Manu, that has been fully declared in the Veda: for that (sage was) omniscient.[1]

But the authority of *dharma* is not the highest, and it is possible for a man to advance to a stage at which he owes no obligation to it. This is a fact that raises serious difficulties. It is not as if there were a ready-made code of laws, and an ideal, of which they were a partial expression, and by reference to which the code might be indefinitely extended. For it is only to a limited extent and in an ambiguous sense that *dharma* receives its content from the highest ideal. The want of a fertilizing ideal and the existence of a social morality that rests on authority are facts which have had the effect of preventing progress in ethical thought and practice. The Śāstras stand, and to this day social life is to an almost incredible degree regulated by their precepts. Not that the intellectual ferment which is going on in India at the present time has not spread to the sphere of ethical thought. Ethical questions are being discussed, and in certain circles the highest and most ancient authority is being challenged. One reads occasionally articles in which it is held that the system of *dharma* enjoined by the sacred writings had a value at the time at which it was formulated, which it does not have amid the changed conditions of the present. But one does not see much in the way of constructive suggestion that possesses much value.

The social and ethical situation within Hinduism at the present time is a very peculiar one, and its peculiarities have been far too little appreciated by many Western critics. We Westerners pride ourselves on our progressiveness. The Hindu realizes that the West is restless and changeful; he is not so

[1] *Manu*, ii. 7.

sure of the progress. And he points with pride to the fact that Hindu civilization has seen many Western civilizations rise and decay. Down through the centuries Hindu civilization has stood firm founded on *dharma*, each individual unquestioningly fulfilling the duties of the station into which he has been born. There is something grand about such a social system, and it is not wonderful that there are some bred in the restless West who are attracted by the restfulness which seems to characterize life lived within such a system. Nor is the Hindu impressed by a certain kind of argument which some base on the political consequences of the acceptance of a system which so prescribes the lines of the individual's activity. This argument is put in the form in which it is most obnoxious to the Hindu mind by Mill:

> The greater part of the world has, properly speaking, no history, because the despotism of Custom is complete. This is the case over the whole East. . . . And we see the result. Those nations must once have had originality; they did not start out of the ground populous, lettered, and versed in many of the arts of life; they made themselves all this, and were then the greatest and most powerful nations of the world. What are they now? The subjects or dependents of tribes whose forefathers wandered in the forests when theirs had magnificent palaces and gorgeous temples, but over whom custom exercised only a divided rule with liberty and progress.[1]

To the Hindu mind all this seems utterly irrelevant; and the fact that such arguments are used seem to it to be but one more mark of the materialism of the West.

But India has not been able to remain outside the currents of progress that are sweeping over the world. Its ethical ideas have not remained untouched. The attempt is being made to combine traditional modes of thought with others which are new and alien. The results are strange, sometimes tragic. There are some who are seeking on the basis of an historical understanding of the situation to construct a philosophy of life, the main fabric of which shall be Hindu, but

[1] *Liberty*, p. 128.

in which shall be incorporated whatever they believe to be good in Western culture. There are more who, while nominally holding to the ancient fabric of Hindu custom, have in spirit departed from it, and who wander among the ideas of the West with no clear guiding light.

This is a point that has been dealt with at some length, because a clear apprehension of it will help to make intelligible a great deal in Hindu ethical thought which otherwise might perplex one. The moral ideas of all peoples have certain features in common. Murder, theft, lying, and the like, are vices, the avoidance of which is a matter of importance in any state, and in some way or within certain limits they have been denounced wherever men have lived together. Again, there are virtues which have their root in primitive practice, the outcome not of reasoned thought but of impulses of the heart, reinforced by magical belief—virtues such as liberality, hospitality, and the like. These are the heritage of manifold peoples; and it is not in them that we look for what is distinctive in the morality of any people, though there may be great significance in the ways in which these ideas are held and practised. We have to look deeper for what is really distinctive—to the beliefs which are held as to the meaning and purpose of life as a whole. In the preceding chapters many quotations have been given which will have served to show the kind of virtues which are of most fundamental importance, and it will have been seen that, generally speaking, they are those virtues in which is manifested that unworldly and anti-social spirit which is the natural outcome of the chief tendencies of philosophical thought. This is so even in the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*. It will be of interest to look again at a list of virtues given in it:

> Pridelessness, guilelessness, harmlessness, patience, uprightness, service of the master, purity, steadfastness, self-suppression,
>
> passionlessness towards the objects of the sense instruments, lack of the thought of an *I*, perception of the frailties of birth, death, age, sickness, and pain,

unattachment, independence of child, wife, home, and the like, everlasting indifference of mind whether fair or foul befall him,

unswerving devotion towards *Me* with undivided Rule, haunting of solitary places, lack of delight in the gatherings of men,

ceaseless dwelling in the knowledge of the One over Self, vision of the goal of the Knowledge of the Verity,—these are declared to be Knowledge. Ignorance is otherwise than this.[1]

Even Tukārām—to take a representative of the thought of the people in its less sophisticated expressions—shows the same anti-social tendencies at times.

Despise home, wealth and country: embrace spiritually beasts and trees.[2]

The line of argument that has been followed in the preceding pages would be repudiated by some of the most thoughtful Indians at the present time, such, for example, as Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. They have maintained that the thought of the ancient Hindu scriptures does not justify the passivity which we have found reason to believe they teach, but that the realization of their ideals is to be found in action. In his *Sādhanā* Dr. Rabindranath protests against that ideal of life of which the *sannyāsī* is the representative:

He who thinks to reach God by running away from the world, when and where does he expect to meet him? How far can he fly—can he fly and fly, till he flies into nothingness itself? No, the coward who would fly can nowhere find him. We must be brave enough to be able to say: We are reaching him here in this very spot, now at this very moment. We must be able to assure ourselves that as in our actions we are realizing ourselves, so in ourselves we are realizing him who is the self of self. We must earn the right to say so unhesitatingly by clearing away with our own effort all obstruction, all disorder, all discords from our path of activity; we must be able to say, 'In my work is my joy, and in that joy does the joy of my joy abide.'[3]

But it may be emphatically maintained that this conception of realization through action has no sure foundation in Hindu thought. The *Bhagavadgītā* is the great authority

[1] *Bhagavadgītā*, xiii. 7–11. [2] Trans. *Fraser and Marathe*, p. 284.
[3] *Sādhanā*, 130.

of those who hold otherwise, but it is only in a qualified and uncertain way that activity finds support and justification there.

The radical fault in Hindu ethical thought seems to lie in this, that the root of all evil is held to reside not in the will but the intellect. It is ignorance, not moral fault, which in the last analysis stands between the soul and its realization of the highest, or, to put it more accurately, moral error is not something *sui generis*, but is one of the fruits of intellectual error. This, as we have seen, is the position which is held by all the great philosophical schools. And from the philosophical point of view the task of man is the removal of those obstructions that stand in the way of his attainment of knowledge. Let it be emphasized that the Hindu position is not really related to the question, as old at least as Socrates in Western thought, whether with full knowledge one can deliberately choose the evil. That is a profound psychological question, and the answers that may be given to it raise still more profound metaphysical problems. The Hindu holds a point of view at which the question is irrelevant. He maintains that with full knowledge the desires will not be trained towards either the good or the evil, but the root of desire itself will be cut. The moral ideal is thus not fulfilled but transcended. And in spite of all that has been said of the place that is given to activity in the *Bhagavadgītā*, what has just been said applies with equal truth to the doctrine which it teaches.

> He who rejoices not, hates not, grieves not, desires not, who renounces alike fair and foul, and has devotion, is dear to Me.[1]

At the stage of enlightenment, even when what is called devotion to the Supreme has a place in it, the soul is carried beyond good and evil.

We may consider briefly one more question which has been much discussed regarding Hindu thought, its alleged pessimism. This is a question which has not always been intelli-

[1] *Bhagavadgītā*, xii. 17.

gently treated. It has been thought by some who have approached the question from the point of view of Christian thought that it can be solved by a mere exposition of the nature of the goal which Hinduism offers. As a matter of fact not very much can be made by arguments conducted along this line. Whether the goal be regarded as absorption in Brahma or a state of continued bliss in union with the Supreme, the answer to the question whether or not the end to which one may attain is supremely good, will be determined very largely by individual predilections. There is, however, one aspect of the case, considered even from this point of view, which merits consideration. Can it be maintained that the goal is supremely worth attaining, or is it, far from being a true goal, merely a deliverance from the struggle? In answer to this it may be said that whatever bliss may be enjoyed in actual realization, the struggle for attainment is regarded as evil. In it there is contributed nothing which serves to enrich the possession to be won. The struggle availeth nought; 'the labour and the wounds are vain.' Optimism and pessimism are after all relative terms, though derived from superlatives, and the attainment even of a great good loses something of its value when the quest is so meaningless as the quest of this is. For to the Hindu mind the whole business of individual existence is in the end a mystery, a hard judgement for which with all his ingenuity he has not been able to provide satisfactory justification.

But this touches only one side of the question. Let it be granted that the end is good, and there remains the other and far more important question as to the means to its attainment. Has the individual any reasonable guarantee that he will be able to reach the goal? The answer to this raises questions which will be discussed in the next chapter in connexion with the doctrine of *karma*, and, not to anticipate what will be said there, we may content ourselves with remarking at this point that, as this doctrine is usually formulated, little room if any is left for freedom, and the soul is carried on from one birth to

another without its being able effectively to determine the direction which it is to take. It is entangled in a round of existence by conditions which belong to itself, but which are, strictly speaking, beyond its control. Now, even if we were able to prove that Hindu thought is through and through deterministic, that would not settle the question of its pessimism, for the question at issue between pessimism and optimism is not necessarily the same as that between necessity and self-determination. The best possible world might quite conceivably be one in which the individual was under the rule of forces other than himself. But in Hindu thought the goal is represented as for most men so distant, and the way to it as so controlled by forces that are in every real sense alien to himself, that we feel justified in maintaining that Hindu thought is pessimistic in the extreme. And it will hardly be denied that this pessimism colours a very large part of Hindu literature.

CHAPTER II

KARMA AND TRANSMIGRATION

THE doctrines of *karma* and *saṁsāra*, which in Indian thought are so closely bound up together, merit discussion in a separate chapter because of the great importance that they have had in the ethical thinking of the Hindus. There is no other single conception which has had anything like the same importance as the doctrine of *karma*, and there is probably nothing in which Hindu ethical thought is more sharply distinguished from the ethical thought of the West than by the ways in which it has applied this doctrine.

At every stage in our study of the history of Hindu thought, from the time at which it became reflective, we have been brought face to face with the conception, but it may be well here first of all to fix our attention on the essential principle contained in it. It is more than the familiar principle, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, which in some form is believed by people belonging to widely sundered schools of thought. It is this doctrine, interpreted in a particular way, and understood as working so inexorably that the simple converse of it is also true—whatsoever a man reaps, that must he have sowed. In this peculiarly Indian form of the doctrine of the fruit of action belief in some kind of transmigration is implied. It is implied in some way—and the accounts given of it are various—that after the death of the body the life of the individual is continued in another body, and so on in indefinite series. The doctrine of *karma* may thus be stated abstractly in a form in which it is easily comprehended—whatever a man suffers or enjoys is the fruit of his own deed, a harvest sprung from his own actions, good or bad, committed in previous lives.

But much misunderstanding has arisen in the minds of many

people from the fact that the doctrine has been apprehended in this abstract way, apart from its more concrete expressions in Hindu thought. Theosophy has done much to popularize it in a modified form in recent times. And apart from this it has become more familiar to the West in its Buddhist form than in any of the forms it has taken in Hinduism. By the Buddhists it was interpreted in a way more thoroughly ethical, and at the same time more logically consistent, than it has been by most Hindu thinkers. The ordinary reader whose knowledge of Indian religions is of a general and superficial character frequently owes his knowledge of *karma* largely to such sources, and consequently fails to realize in how many ways the simplicity of the doctrine has been interfered with. Let us look at some of these.

In the first place, as we have seen in previous chapters, the kinds of actions that are supposed to produce good and bad fruit respectively are by no means always actions that most of us would regard as ethically good and bad. The telling of a lie is an act which produces an evil crop, but so does marrying before an elder brother.[1] Showing kindness to strangers is an act which produces good fruit, but so does the performance of many kinds of ritual and magical acts. Besides, the various forms of penance by which atonement is made for sins, in many of which it is impossible to see any ethical value, are supposed to have the effect of wiping out actions which otherwise would have evil consequences. Throughout the history of Hindu thought the ethical has generally been but imperfectly discriminated from the non-ethical, and the consequence is that the accounts that are given of the relation of act to fruit are often unsatisfactory from the ethical point of view.

Again the inevitableness of the connexion between act and fruit in the individual is interfered with in certain ways. A sentence from the *Mahābhārata* has sometimes been quoted as expressing the law of *karma* in its strictness—'that no

[1] *Manu*, xi. 61.

man inherits the good or evil deed of another man.' As a matter of fact, in primitive ethical thought the individual is regarded only within certain limits as separable or distinguishable from the other members of his family or tribe. We see this in ancient Hebrew customs—for example, in the doom which Achan's sin brought on his whole family, all being thought of as sharing in his sin. The same idea comes to expression in certain thoughts and customs which are found in the history of Hinduism. For example, Manu says that punishment 'strikes down the king who swerves from his duty, together with his relatives'.[1] Again, it is stated that a faithful wife shares the fate of her husband.[2] Her own *karma* does not work itself out independently of his, but, provided only she be faithful to him, she shares his fate, irrespective of what her own actions would otherwise have determined for her. There is another and very different way in which one may partake of the *karma* of another. In Manu much is said regarding the transference to the king of the guilt of acts which he has failed to visit with their proper punishment. Similarly transference of *karma* may take place under certain conditions from host to guest or *vice versa*. The belief is even found that it is possible for one voluntarily to transfer his good *karma* to another. In all this we see certain features that are characteristic of the conception of *karma*. A man reaps what he has sown, not in accordance with the operation of a principle whereby each action contributes to the shaping of his destiny, or to the giving of his character such a bent that it is bound to lead him to a certain end. For the Hindu thinks less in terms of character than in terms of acts. And each act is thought of as a seed bearing fruit, the seed or growing plant not being irrevocably fixed in a particular soil, but being capable under certain conditions of being transferred from one soil to another.

Hopkins[3] draws attention to another way in which the

[1] *Manu*, vii. 28. [2] *Manu*, v. 166, ix. 29.
[3] *J. R. A. S.*, 1906, pp. 588 ff.

operation of *karma* in the individual is interfered with. He finds in the *Mahābhārata* the idea that the fruit of *karma* may appear in one's sons or other descendants. He thinks that this idea is the simple consequence of the evidence that forced itself upon men that a man's family shared with him the punishment of wrong-doing, as when a king's relatives suffered with him because of the wrong which he had done. It seems hardly necessary to go so far for an explanation. May it not be that the idea that the fruit of a parent's actions is inherited by his children is the outcome of experience of the simple fact, which can hardly be ignored, that in some way the fruit of one's acts is passed on to one's descendants? The extraordinary thing is not that occasionally this should be recognized and admitted, but that anywhere where men have begun to think about problems of conduct it should not force itself upon their attention.

It has been pointed out, particularly in our study of the Upanishads, that reward and punishment were originally believed to be meted out, not in new incarnations, but in other spheres of existence, in heaven and hell. We have seen how the attempt has been made to reconcile the two beliefs, and the result has not been satisfactory. Through the retention of the belief in heaven and hell, the machinery through which *karma* is supposed to work has been greatly complicated, with the result that frequently we seem to have it taught that reward and punishment are given twice over, once in heaven or hell, and again in a new birth on earth. It often requires the exercise of considerable ingenuity to get over this difficulty.

These are but some of the ways in which the doctrine of *karma* is crossed by or complicated with other ideas. In his article on 'Modifications of the Karma Doctrine', Hopkins has discussed the subject with some fullness. He has shown, for example, the incongruity with the doctrine of the old belief in sacrifice, repentance, and penance as destroyers of sin. But enough has perhaps been said at the present stage to

make it clear that the doctrine of *karma* as we find it expressed in Hindu literature is not the simple thing that it is often supposed to be. Much might be made by the critic of the difficulties connected with this complication. But it is questionable whether it would be fair to lay great emphasis on these. For it might reasonably be held that there is in the doctrine a perfectly intelligible principle, which may at times have been inadequately stated, but which nevertheless is capable of being considered apart from the weaknesses which inhere in any particular statement. As a matter of fact, in discussing the problem with Hindus at the present time, we do, as a rule, have the question narrowed down for us to that of the inseparable union between works and their fruits. So it is desirable that in our discussion of the validity of the doctrine we should deal with essentials, setting aside accidental ideas that have been connected with it.

Let us, then, examine the doctrine in its simple form, and let us first of all consider briefly the belief in transmigration, which is essentially bound up with the doctrine. There is no reason why the fruit of actions should be supposed to appear in the individual in another incarnation in this world, for the same principle of the relation of action to its fruit might quite well be supposed to work itself out in another sphere of being. But, as a matter of fact, in Hindu thought *karma* and *saṁsāra* are bound up together. The belief in transmigration itself is not unique. It has appeared among various peoples at various times. For example, scholars have been impressed by the fact that the Pythagoreans held the belief, and attempts were made at one time to find some link of connexion between Pythagorean and Indian thought. It is now generally agreed that the belief has sprung up independently in various quarters. This is a fact which is full of interest, and the question of the origin of the belief is a fascinating one. But it need not detain us here, for questions of validity are different from questions of origin. We may also pass over arguments based on the idea of the intimate

relation which undoubtedly exists between the psychical and the physical, by the use of which some have sought to prove the impossibility of re-incarnation in another body. For any such argument might be met by the *argumentum ad hominem* that on the same grounds practically any kind of belief in the continuance of individual existence after the dissolution of the body would be untenable. Many of the arguments by which the Christian defends his belief in a 'future life' would in this case do equal service to the believer in transmigration.

A more serious objection to the doctrine of transmigration is this, that it is capable neither of proof nor disproof. But here again we might be faced with the *argumentum ad hominem* that the same difficulty attaches to all forms that the belief in a future life takes. Some would go farther and deny the truth of the assertion, maintaining that there have been men who have been able to recall experiences which they have undergone in former births. Both in Hinduism and in Buddhism this claim has been made. The evidence which has been offered in support of these claims has, however, seldom made a deep impression on the minds of men who have been trained to weigh evidence. It is when the fact that proof and disproof are supposed to be equally impossible is taken along with other considerations which remain to be considered that its full weight will be felt.

It is on moral grounds that the belief in transmigration is most strongly defended by the modern Hindu. He holds that it is only on the hypothesis of successive rebirths that certain of the facts of life can be satisfactorily explained. The man born blind, it is explained, must have been born so on account of evil deeds done by him in a previous state of existence. Those who have discussed the problem with educated Hindus find that they continually come back to this, that all suffering and misfortune which the individual experiences must have its root in his own actions. It may be safely said that this is one of the most profound convictions of the average Hindu mind, and one that to many seems beyond

dispute. It is at least as deeply ingrained in the Hindu mind as the belief in God was in the mind of the Jew in Old Testament times. This is in a way surprising, for the belief involves the assumption that the Universe is constituted on moral lines. It is doubtful whether such an assumption fits in with the main lines of Hindu thought. It is by no means clear why the demand should be made at all for a justification of the suffering which humanity endures. It might well be but a moment in the juggling process by which conscious beings are misled and drawn away from reality, and any further explanation might appear superfluous. Indeed there are traces alongside the *karma* doctrine of an older theory that a man's lot is due not to himself but to the fate imposed upon him by the gods. Traces of this may be seen, e.g. in *Manu*, xi. 47, where it is said that it is *daiva*, fate, which causes a man to sin; and the notion of a fate belonging to one apart from one's acts has been traced elsewhere down through Hindu thought.[1] Also the idea of the grace of God, which is prominent in much of the literature of *bhakti* from the *Bhagavadgītā* onwards, is in contradiction to the *karma* doctrine of the equivalence of act and fruit from another point of view. Nevertheless the belief in *karma* remains deeply rooted in the mind of the average Hindu.

Another difficulty, which may seem to be of minor importance, but which is still very real, is closely connected with that just indicated. The whole tendency of Hindu thought has been to depreciate the physical. The highest life is one lived in indifference to the attractions of all earthly things. Yet the doctrine of *karma* assumes an attitude to the physical which elevates it to a position of great significance. The point of the difficulty may no doubt be turned by the argument that to him who has attained the goal, or who is on the last stage of the journey towards the goal, all good or ill fortune is indifferent. But this is an argument which rests on another rock of offence—that dualism which runs through

[1] See article by Hopkins, *J. R. A. S.*, 1906, p. 584.

so much of Hindu thought, according to which the life of every day is separated by a wide gulf from the kind of experience which has been held up as the ideal. What is relatively good or bad can be so, even relatively, from the point of view of rational beings, only when it is in relation to what is really of worth. Good and ill fortune in this world in the end count for nothing.

> Verily the man whom these disturb not, indifferent alike to pain and to pleasure, and wise, is meet for immortality, O chief of men.[1]

Why, then, make so much of these as the fruits of actions?

It may still be maintained that after all the facts are on the side of the believer in *karma*. Sin leads to suffering. Whatsoever a man soweth, that *doth* he also reap. Experience, it is said, testifies to the truth of these principles. In a sense it does. We see these principles in operation about us, and it may well be held that we are justified on the ground of what we see in inferring that we see the operation of a wider principle of retribution by which the deeds of men meet with their due reward or punishment elsewhere. But if this inference is justified, the facts do not justify it in the form which it takes in the *karma* doctrine. The facts of life do not bear out the idea that 'no one inherits the good or evil deeds of another man'. Men are so linked together in human society that a good or an evil deed touches an indefinite number of men, bringing pleasure or pain, good fortune or ill, to many who have no responsibility for the deed. The doctrine of *karma* makes our admiration of pain and suffering endured by men for the sake of others absurd. It leaves no place for what has been called vicarious suffering, such as is exemplified in ordinary life in the bearing by men of one another's burdens, and which is seen in its most sublime form in the Cross of Christ. Wrong-doing certainly leads to suffering, but in the first instance it is often the suffering of persons other than the wrong-doer. It may be answered that the

[1] *Bhagavadgītā*, ii. 15.

Christian believes equally with the Hindu that in the end the wrong-doer too will suffer. But that is not the point. What is here maintained is that the fact that an individual suffers does not prove that he has been guilty of sins either in this life or in another. And further there is a thought regarding suffering which believers in the doctrine of *karma* have never clearly apprehended, but which is of the greatest importance. There is no such thing as *mere* physical suffering. Pain endured in a good cause may be accompanied by such spiritual exaltation that it ceases to be pain, while in the case of another who through wrong-doing has brought the pain on himself it may be almost insupportable. This is a distinction that can have no meaning to him who believes that all that is endured is the fruit of the individual's own acts.

Let us turn to another line of thought. It is frequently urged that the belief in *karma* has great practical value, inasmuch as the anticipation of reward and punishment for all one's good and evil actions must operate as a powerful motive to well-doing. There is, no doubt, something in this contention. It is generally admitted that anticipation of reward and punishment is an inducement to the living of a life at least outwardly decent, though it is less likely that such anticipations will conduce to a lofty moral life. Further, we cannot deny all moral value to the belief that present experiences are the outcome of good or evil done in former lives. Its value may be impaired by other considerations, but the belief in itself has value. The effects of wrong-doing, to look at but one side of the case, are present with a man; they are not something that may be in the future. This should stimulate a man so to live as to avoid in the future similar punishment.

But there are elements in the case that detract from the moral value of the doctrine. For example, one weakness has been laid hold upon by many writers on the subject of *karma*. They have held that an immoral element is introduced into the doctrine when it is said that a man is punished for sins

which he committed in a former life and of which he has no recollection. This objection is sometimes pushed too far, and stated in forms in which it might be used with equal cogency to condemn the doctrine of heredity. Indeed with greater cogency; for it might be maintained that it is far more unjust that a man should suffer for sins committed by progenitors, for which he had no responsibility and of which he has no knowledge, than it is that he should be punished for sins committed by himself which have escaped his memory. But the principle of heredity does not work in the hard, mechanical way in which *karma* is supposed to work. This is a fact that may be expressed in various ways. For example, it often happens that a man becomes strong on that side of his character on which by heredity he is weak. When a man knows that he has inherited a tendency to a particular vice, he often sets himself resolutely to combat it, and his character gains in strength from the combat. Or even when a man suffers some physical disability which is the result of the wrong-doing of some progenitor, it is not necessarily regarded as an unmitigated misfortune. It may be the occasion of activities for the good of his fellow men which otherwise might not have suggested themselves to him. And there is the other aspect of human suffering, to which Jesus referred in that most illuminating passage where He speaks of the man born blind. To those who asked whether his blindness was due to his own sin or that of his parents He replied, 'Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him'. Suffering is not necessary penal; on the contrary it may be an occasion for the exercise of certain virtues on the part of others, which otherwise might not have been developed in them.

So, then, suffering which one owes to evil heredity is in no real sense of the term punishment. According to the doctrine of *karma*, on the other hand, whatever one suffers is the direct fruit of one's own misdeeds. He suffers from various disabilities from which the sufferer from the evil deeds

of his forbears is exempt. To begin with, he has no indication in the nature of the penalty he endures of the particular line along which he should seek to amend his character. There are, indeed, passages where it is said, e.g. that he who steals water will be born again as a duck, he who steals corn as a mouse, and where other penalties of a similar kind are threatened. But such penalties can hardly be looked upon as having a reformatory character. And as regards the great mass of suffering there is no means of knowing the precise nature of the sin which occasioned it. Again, if a man believes that his own suffering and that of others is a punishment for sin, that thought is in danger of arresting the impulse to the service of others in the alleviation of suffering. There can be little doubt that it is this belief, more than any other one factor, that is responsible for the backwardness of the people of India in the work of ministering to the unfortunate. In recent times it has been by men in whom the belief has been breaking down that the work of social service has been taken up most enthusiastically.

We may consider in somewhat fuller detail another difficulty which besets the doctrine of *karma*, which has already been hinted at. In the characteristic form of the doctrine it has been seen that good and evil are thought of in terms of act rather than of character. Now, it is generally recognized that works are, when taken in isolation, but a poor criterion of what a man is. There are works formally evil which may be the outcome of stupidity, or of good intention unskilfully executed, as well as of evil purpose. And there are deeds apparently good which are the outcome of long-sighted wickedness. These are facts to which too little weight has been given in Hindu thought. In teaching regarding *karma* it is almost invariably deeds that are spoken of as persisting and producing fruit, not tendencies of character. 'The deed does not die', it is said.[1] Good deeds form, as it were, the credit side, and bad deeds the debit side of an

[1] *Manu*, xi. 46.

account, which every one of necessity incurs. The relation of this account to the individual is of a comparatively external kind. As we have seen, *karma* may be in certain ways transferred. It may be exhausted without any suggestion that the individual becomes in any way different. Good and evil deeds are thought of not as realities that may have infinite consequences, but as having values that are definite and fixed. The Hindu would have but little understanding of or sympathy with the Puritan saying that 'as one leak may sink a ship, so one sin may sink a soul'. The evil deed is considered not as symptomatic of a disease, which it in turn aggravates, but as constituting a load or a debt involving various disabilities. This way of looking at conduct shows itself in many ways in the everyday thought of many Hindu people. To mention only one of these ways—new-comers to India have often remarked on the curious attitude that Hindus seem to take to cases of wrong-doing. They often argue that for a single lapse a man should not be punished, even when the deed is one that to the western mind seems to indicate serious culpability. It is not that the benefit of a 'First Offenders' Act' is sought, but, as one sometimes hears it put in so many words, that the seriousness of a single wrong act is not recognized.

Now, these are facts which have very important consequences for the doctrine of *karma* generally. If for 'deed' we substitute 'character' in the various formulations of the doctrine, the whole situation is altered. Character certainly bears its proper fruit, but its most important fruit is itself. A man's destiny must be that for which he fits himself; it cannot be the fruit of a series of external acts abstracted from the character of which they are the expression. Judgements passed on acts apart from the character of the agent are usually very precarious. We do speak of certain kinds of acts as good or bad, and we speak of the good and bad points in men's characters. But that does not alter the fact that character is a unity, and that it cannot be truly represented after the

analogy of a balance sheet with its credit and debit sides. It is possible for us to think of the individual as migrating from one form of being to another, each new birth being determined by the bent which his character has received in the preceding life. It may seem to us that certain men have characters more suited to the life of the 'tiger or the ape' than to that of man, and it may not require much exercise of the imagination to think of them as re-incarnated in such forms. But this is a conception different from that with which we are familiar in Indian thought. In all the varieties of statement in which the doctrine is presented, it is the deed, not the character, which is supposed to persist. And this thought of deeds as existing in isolation from each other and from the character of the doer is one that is psychologically unsound.

There is another objection to the doctrine of *karma* which has been put in various forms by many writers on the subject, viz. that the doctrine, as involving a fatalistic explanation of human conduct, does nothing to solve the problem of the inequalities of human fortunes. The problem, it is said, is merely shelved. One life is explained by reference to a previous life, and it by reference to another, and so on *ad infinitum*. This objection is presented with some hesitation, because it has been denied that the deeds that men commit are determined by their *karma*; it is said that it is only those experiences which lie outside their own choice that are so determined. This is a point that raises the whole question of the attitude of Hindu thought to the problem of freedom. It may, at least, be safely said that popular thought is largely fatalistic. The average individual feels that his misdeeds are the outcome of the operation of forces beyond his control as are the misfortunes that beset him. And Śaṅkarāchārya at any rate, among philosophers, has definitely maintained that the actions that a man performs are determined by *karma*. He says that the actions and sufferings of man are due to a cause inherent in himself. God apportions good and evil among men, having regard to the efforts made by them.

'But', he asks, 'can this regard to the efforts made by the souls exist together with the dependence of all activity on God? Certainly. For though the activity depends on God, it is only the soul that acts; while God causes it to act when it acts; and as He now in causing it to act pays regard to former efforts, so, too, He in causing it to act formerly had regard to still earlier efforts; for *saṁsāra* is without beginning.'[1]

This is an admission which undermines the value of the doctrine of *karma* as a justification of the seeming injustices of life. On this admission the difficulty is, indeed, only shelved. No explanation is given of the problem which is supposed to be explained. The individual becomes the sport of an overruling fate, and the real cause of his good or ill fortune is as mysterious as ever. *Saṁsāra* is eternal—without beginning. Living beings have been through all time tossed about like the balls of the juggler, and the statement that man by his own actions determines his destiny may be as true, but it is as irrelevant, as the statement that the conditions of the ball's rising in the air determine its fall.

One more objection to the doctrine of *karma* is that it is incompatible with belief in the possibility of the forgiveness of sins. This is an objection that will have no weight with those who believe thoroughly in the doctrine. There are many to whom the idea of forgiveness appears an immoral idea, which contrasts very unfavourably with that of the inevitable union of work and fruit. They also point out that the idea of forgiveness involves a theory of the relation of sin to God which they cannot accept. This second point we may pass over for the present, but the first point deserves some attention. It really brings us back to an aspect of the question discussed above as to the moral adequacy of the doctrine. The question before us here is whether this rigid doctrine of the relation of work and fruit is necessary for morality, or whether the highest moral doctrine may not admit of, or even demand, the possibility of forgiveness. It is noteworthy that it is in

[1] Translated by Deussen, *System of the Vedānta*, p. 323.

the works which manifest the spirit of deepest moral earnestness that the tendency has been most marked to depart from the rigidity of the doctrine of *karma*, and to grant a place to the grace of God, which is given freely, not according to merit. For example, *karma* is accepted unquestioningly in the *Bhagavadgītā*, but we realize at once that we are face to face with one of the many inconsistencies of the book when we come to such a statement as this:

> Whatever be thy work, thine eating, thy sacrifice, thy gift, thy mortification, make thou of it an offering to Me, O son of Kunti.
>
> Thus shalt thou be released from the bonds of Works, fair or foul of fruit; thy spirit inspired by casting-off of Works and following the Rule, thou shalt be delivered and come unto Me.[1]

This quotation does not refer to forgiveness, but it refers to grace, a conception which really is a denial of the doctrine of *karma*. The forgiveness of sins as it is understood by Christians is thought of as a particular expression of the grace of God, and it is connected with a distinctive way of regarding sin which one hardly finds in Hinduism. But what is of importance here is the fact that within Hinduism the forms of religion that have had the greatest influence in the production of a spirit of moral earnestness have been forms in which the doctrine of *karma* was superseded by a doctrine of grace. The real bearings of the case have not always been explicitly recognized, and the two antagonistic doctrines have been held alongside each other, as in the *Bhagavadgītā*; for belief in *karma* is deep-rooted in the Indian mind. But the fact remains that it has been the thought of a way of escape from the operation of *karma* that has given to men freedom and hope. It has done this only imperfectly, for the idea has been only imperfectly conceived. It has not been easy for the Hindu mind to get away from the idea of action as working itself out pitilessly and inexorably, to that of a God who is gracious and forgiving, with a forgiveness that does not

[1] *Bhagavadgītā*, ix. 27, 28.

make sin a light thing, but a thing abhorrent to him who has been forgiven.

If the criticisms which have been offered above are sound, then it has been shown that the doctrine of *karma* lacks justification on moral grounds. The doctrine of *saṁsāra* falls with it. It has been shown that it can be neither proved nor disproved when stated simply by itself. But the fact that moral justification for it is wanting serves to make a *prima facie* case against it.

CHAPTER III

HINDU ASCETICISM

THROUGHOUT the history of Hinduism ascetic ideals have maintained so strong a hold on the minds of the cultured and uncultured classes alike that it may be well to devote some attention to the subject of asceticism itself. There is no land in the world in which ascetic practices have been so widely followed. To the mind of the Hindu, the life of the *sannyāsī* who has freed himself from all human ties, and stripped himself of all that ministers to physical comfort and well-being, has almost always seemed to be the highest. There are many who in the full vigour of their life have not been able to bring themselves to the point of breaking family and social ties, who, when death is near, take refuge in the estate of the *sannyāsī* after the manner of those souls described by Milton, who 'dying put on the weeds of Dominic or Francis'. And there are multitudes who pass through life, engaging in all its social activities, who hope for another life in which they shall be more favourably situated for the casting off of worldly goods and worldly ties. Even in their case the ascetic element is not wholly lacking, as is evidenced by the fasts and penances to which so many of them submit themselves. We have further to remember the widespread practice of Yogic exercises, inspired by a purpose not essentially different. All this is an expression of a deeply rooted belief in the efficacy of discipline or negation of the flesh as an aid to the attainment of the highest.

The rationale of Hindu asceticism has already been made sufficiently clear. It has its justification in a widely accepted philosophical theory of the nature of reality. It was certainly

no philosophical theory that originally gave rise to it. It was rather the practice that suggested the theory: or, if this statement seems too strong, it may at least be said that the practice gave a great impetus to the development of the theory. But the theory has in turn reinforced the practice, in a measure refined it, and provided for it a justification in reason which is lacking to ascetic practices followed to this day by more primitive peoples. Hindu asceticism in its distinctive form can therefore be justly criticized only if it is considered in relation to the intellectual basis on which it rests.

It is well, however, to bear in mind the fact that ascetic elements have found a place in the ideals of men apart from considerations so fundamental. Almost universal among primitive peoples are certain forms of ascetic practice, inspired by motives magical or sacrificial. Such practices were followed in India in ancient times, and they have persisted to the present day. So far as such motives have been operative, we have in Hindu asceticism the same spirit as that manifested in the ascetic practices followed in connexion with ancient Greek, Phrygian, and Egyptian cults. Further, asceticism has found a place in some form or other within most, if not all, of the higher religions of the world. Mahommedanism has its feast of Ramazan, observed so religiously by all believers; and it has its faqirs. Christendom has had its great company of anchorites and monks, and its hair shirts and whips and other instruments for the subduing of the flesh. And it has numbered within it men like St. Simeon Stylites, who in their efforts to free themselves from the dominion of the body, have gone to the wildest extremes of self-denial and self-torture.

There are, of course, distinctions which must be recognized between the ascetic practices which have been followed in connexion with different religions, and even in connexion with the same religion. There has been considerable confusion as to what is to be included under the head of ascetic practices. Some would include acts of self-restraint which amount to nothing more than the curbing of wanton desires or the girding

of the mind and body to distasteful tasks. Certain Indian writers of modern times would go so far as to include work for the development of the material resources of their country. This is obviously far too wide a denotation to give to the term asceticism, for it would be thus made to cover all effort that is inspired by any purpose. Yet it is not easy to draw a clear line of division. There may seem to be a world of difference between the man who sacrifices a meal that a hungry neighbour may be fed and him who betakes himself to monastic life, between the man who abstains from alcoholic liquors and him who abstains from all but the barest necessaries of existence. Yet, after all, it depends chiefly on the motive whether there is or is not. It is curious to find that so many people have failed to grasp this elementary distinction, and to observe the impression made on a certain type of mind by certain forms of self-sacrifice apart from any consideration of the motives inspiring it. This, it may be remarked in passing, is an interesting evidence of the strength of the ascetic 'instinct' in human nature. We shall not here attempt anything so precarious as a definition of asceticism, but shall content ourselves with drawing certain distinctions between motives to self-denial and austerity, which must be held clearly in view if we are to arrive at any satisfactory estimate of the moral value of the practices in question.

In the first place, a broad general division may be made among motives to asceticism according as the good aimed at is that of the individual or of society. The history of Christian asceticism furnishes us with examples of both classes of motives. When St. Francis of Assisi subjected himself to privations and hardships, he did so in the service of Christ among men. This motive led to acts of remarkable self-sacrifice—the sharing of his single garment with another, the continual submission of himself to all kinds of indignities and privations. He found satisfaction in this life, and he even maintained that 'in these things is perfect joy'. Yet suffering was not endured for its own sake but for the sake of others.

Jesus illustrates the other *askesis* when He says: 'If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell' (Matt. v. 30). It will be seen that in both of these cases the motive is an ethical one. In the one case it is the good of others that is directly sought, one enduring suffering or want that others may suffer less. In the other case it is self-discipline, undertaken not for the mere sake of casting off, but for the better government and direction of the individual's activities as a whole. It will be observed that in Christian morality these motives are not in antagonism to each other, and it could be shown that a self-discipline which has no social reference, however widely it may be practised, is not in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. Yet the two motives can be distinguished.

In Hindu asceticism the social motive has been but little apparent. It is only in quite recent times that the idea of suffering and sacrifice for the sake of others has laid powerful hold on the mind of any large section of the Hindu people. The other motive, however, of the discipline of the individual soul, has operated powerfully. The aim has been to break down all that has been understood to interfere with the freedom of the soul, and as an aid to the attainment of this end there have been practised in India forms of self-mortification and penance which have few parallels in the whole history of human conduct.

It is unnecessary to recapitulate here what has been said in earlier chapters regarding the various ramifications of the ascetic idea, or of the various ends which it has been believed possible for the individual to attain through various practices—the power to coerce the gods and the power to bend nature to one's will, to which they have been supposed to give access. In so far as these have been the ends sought, we must look on these practices as not in themselves strictly moral, and what ethical value they may have come to have must be regarded

as in a way accidental. Yet it may be claimed that just as the alchemy which was practised with a view to the discovery of the philosopher's stone led to the discovery of other things of more solid and lasting value, so these crude ascetic practices contributed to the realization of ends attainable through the curbing of the desires and the mortification of the flesh, higher than the mere subjugation to one's arbitrary capricious will of the powers that govern the universe. It is to the highest ideals sought through asceticism within Hinduism to which in a critical study our attention should be chiefly directed. The Christian would demand that the Christian mind should be judged not by reference to such vagaries as those presented by the lives of men like St. Simeon Stylites, but ultimately by reference to the teaching and practice of Christ, and the Hindu may similary claim that there is an essential and an accidental in Hindu practice, through whatever process the essential may have come to be discovered, and however much the accidental may have at times obscured the essential. So we may leave aside the primitive expressions of Hindu asceticism, whether appearing early in time or persisting to the present day.

Asceticism, so defended, has been believed to have value in the way of discipline for the soul in two ways. On the one hand, Yogic practices and less extravagant forms of self-restraint have the effect, if not of leading to freedom, of raising the soul to a higher position in future births. On the other hand, the breaking of all worldly ties is a condition of the attainment of final deliverance. These two ideas are not contradictory to each other, but are in their main principle in harmony, for the ultimate goal is in both cases the same. This is well brought out regarding the Yoga philosophy with its ascetic exercises by Max Müller, when he says:

> It is to serve as a Tāraka, as a ferry, across the ocean of the world, as a light by which to recognize the true independence of the subject from any object: and as a preparation for this, it is to serve as a discipline for subduing all the passions arising from worldly surroundings.[1]

[1] *Six Systems*, p. 356.

The reference here is to the Yoga philosophy and to its peculiar metaphysical position, but there are similar ideas of the value of physical discipline in connexion with the other systems. It is true that the method by which this discipline works is connected with the doctrine of *karma*, the merit of particular acts becoming the property of the agent, and this explanation of the relation of act to agent we have already seen reason to reject. But the principle might be maintained apart from this, and it might be held that ascetic practices have a kathartic value, which is conserved through succeeding births, on grounds which would be free from the difficulties which beset the doctrine of *karma* in its familiar form. Indeed, there seems to be ground for believing that in certain places there is an implied distinction between the effect of certain kinds of austerities and penances, which are the fruit of desire as are other acts, and which accordingly have their appropriate fruits in future births, and that of actions which are the expression of the mortification of desire, though the process may not have reached completion. Whether this be so or not, we can see how it is possible for some to regard Hindu asceticism in its higher forms as moral discipline, aiding the soul to that more and more complete severance from the world which will issue finally in that act of insight in which worldly ties shall be completely broken, the illusion of individuality dispelled, and freedom attained.

On such grounds the claim may be made that Hindu asceticism has high ethical value. Whether we can admit this or not will depend on the view we take of certain considerations to which attention must now be directed. We have already considered the general bearings of Hindu philosophical thought on ethics, and we have come to the conclusion that it provides no satisfactory basis for a theory of morals. But it may be replied that we have taken too narrow a view of morality, and that the recognition of an end to the attainment of which ascetic discipline is so valuable a means, implies that a place has been given to moral effort which has been far

too little regarded. The Christian admits that if the right hand proves an occasion of stumbling it should be cut off, and so does the Hindu. Where is the difference? It would not be quite true to reply that the Christian believes in sacrifice with a view to the attainment of a greater good, for the Hindu would answer that he believes in greater sacrifice with a view to the attainment of a still greater good. So the question would resolve itself again into that of the specific nature of the good to be attained. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore has well described the Hindu position when he says:

> In the typical thought of India it is held that the true deliverance of man is the deliverance from *avidyā*, from ignorance.
>
> It is not in destroying anything that is positive and real, for that cannot be possible, but that which is negative, which obstructs our vision of truth. When this obstruction, which is ignorance, is removed, then only is the eyelid drawn up which is no loss to the eye.[1]

With part of this we should probably all agree. The moral life is carried on through the negating of the lower that the higher may find its true expression. But what is not made clear by typical Indian thought, in spite of all that Dr. Rabindranath has said, is that there are lower and higher forms of activity. Indian asceticism has most normally found its justification in the idea that it is an aid to the cutting of the roots of desire, to the negation of all activity. The right hand is cut off not that the individual may be helped in the task of directing better the activities of the body, but because its activities from their very nature lead the soul astray. Looked at from this point of view, Hindu asceticism is no longer a moral discipline. It is in its essential nature non-moral.

The case may be stated in a slightly different way. Can we have a true morality that is not social, that is not based on an assumption of the permanent worth of individuality and of society? Can we have a true good that is not a social good? In our Western thought self-sacrifice has seldom been regarded

[1] *Sādhanā*, p. 72.

as an end in itself. It has been practised with a view to a fuller realization of the self. It is the lower and more capricious selves that men have sought to slay, making of them stepping-stones to higher things. The true self has been conceived as social. It finds its true expression in activities which bring it into various relationships with other selves. This thought again is connected with the conception of reality as a unity in diversity. To Hindu thought, on the other hand, reality has commonly appeared to be a unity without diversity, or a plurality of existences ultimately without diversity. So asceticism has served as a means not to the stripping of the individual life of hindrances to its true expression of itself within a society of selves, but to the destruction of selfhood itself so far as it is individual. In the light of this the moral life may be held to find its highest expression in asceticism, but we would reply that this is not morality in the sense in which the term has been used traditionally, or in any sense which the etymology of the term justifies. A true morality involves a recognition of the worth of individuality, and of the value of society as the sphere in which it finds its true expression. Hindu thought provides us with no philosophy of society, for its system of *dharma* is not a philosophy. So we are led to the conclusion that Hindu asceticism as defended by philosophic thought does not partake of the nature of ethical activity.

CHAPTER IV

THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION OF HINDUISM TO ETHICAL THOUGHT

THE criticism which has been offered in this work has necessarily been largely of a negative and destructive kind. We have found reason for believing that Hindu philosophical thought furnishes no satisfactory basis for an ethic, while the system of *dharma* rests on no sure intellectual supports. But the impression must not be left that India has nothing to contribute to the study of the great questions connected with the moral life and no suggestions to make for its conduct, that its search for a true way of life has been utterly vain, and that thinkers may pass by its achievements in the ethical sphere merely as phenomena having a certain historical interest but without significance for serious ethical thought. That would be a profound mistake. The spiritual history of India is closely connected with its most fundamental thought, and it is inconceivable that a culture such as that which for millenniums has flourished in India could have rooted itself so deeply and maintained itself so persistently if it did not contain within it elements of great and abiding value.

In considering the contribution which Hindu thought has made, and which it may be believed it has yet to make, it must be borne in mind that we have to deal with something more than a system or systems of thought. We have to deal also with the culture of a people. We shall consequently have to take into account not only the ethical conceptions with which they have worked, but the expression of these in

actual life and the psychological significance of this expression. It is necessary also to bear in mind that the value of ethical conceptions or of forms of practice is not necessarily dependent on their consistency with each other or with fundamental principles, or on our estimate of the validity of these fundamental principles themselves. To take a parallel case from Western thought, few of those who reject the Utilitarian theory of morals would deny that its exponents have made a great contribution to ethical thought or that their principles have had great practical value.

Looking, then, at Hindu thought and culture with these considerations in mind, we may claim for them that they contain elements which are of great value in themselves, and which may serve to enrich the thought and culture of the world.

We may take first the Hindu system of *dharma*. Enough has already been said about it to make clear the weaknesses that belong to it. But, at the same time, we must recognize how great an asset India had and still has in the stable social order which it reflects, and how strong and yet tender are the ties that may bind together members in various relationships within that order. In a restless age in which the whole structure of Western society is in danger of being reduced to chaos, it is not strange that the eyes of many should be directed to the more stable conditions that govern Hindu society, where each man has his place and function irrevocably assigned to him. This is not to say that the Hindu social organization, with its caste and its other unnatural distinctions, can serve as a model in a day of social reconstruction. In its concrete form it is an anachronism which can be accounted for only by the comparative removal of India down through the ages from the influence of the great currents that were moving in the life of the wider world. But it is an equally great mistake to regard it as if it expressed a spirit in which there was nothing worthy. Where the system of caste, considered as a social institution, has been chiefly wrong, has been in its

fixing of men to a particular position of society from which there is no escape whatever may be their individual capacity. Where it has perhaps been strongest has been in its development of a certain sense of vocation, whatever the sphere in which the individual has found himself. This sense of vocation means much for the stability and usefulness of any society and for the worth and dignity of the individual life, and it may be that in time to come the world will learn something from India of the benefits of its exercise. It may also be hoped that when juster conceptions of individual liberty come to prevail in India, her long social discipline will be proved to have tempered the mind of her people, so that liberty will not lead to licence.

Further, it should be observed that, while Hindu society has been so organized that impassable barriers have been erected between different sections of it, there has been on the other hand, as an almost natural consequence of these same conditions, a strong sense of the sacredness of the ties that bind individual to individual within their more restricted communities. The most attractive features in Hindu social life are to be found in the family affections, the mutual devotion of parents and children and of brothers and sisters, in the respect for elders, and in the sense of the identity of the interests of the individual with those of the community, which are so common in Hindu society. A people of whom this can be said is not morally bankrupt. It has great reserves of moral wealth which may yet be turned to the service, not merely of the narrow communities on which it is now lavished, but of the community at large. For the realization of this end great and even fundamental changes of social organization are no doubt necessary, but it may be found that Hindu society has provided a valuable training ground for the public affections.

When we turn our attention, on the other hand, to Hindu asceticism, we shall find elements in it which have abiding worth. We have found grounds for condemning the theoretical

basis on which it rests, and we believe many of its practical expressions to be evil; yet we cannot deny all value to the spirit which has animated it or to the discipline which its practice has involved. It has been the expression of a sense of the supremacy of the spiritual over the material, of the eternal over the temporal, and however much we may disagree with Hindu conceptions of the nature of the spiritual and the eternal, it means much that there should have been so many who have sought resolutely and fearlessly and at all costs to pursue the highest that they knew. There is reason to believe that with truer conceptions of the nature of reality, with the conviction that the phenomenal is not the negation of the real, but that it may be turned to account in the realization of the real, we should find in India, as a result of the discipline to which many of her people have subjected themselves, an ethical spirit that would risk everything in working out its loyalty to the ideal.

Again, it may be believed that India will have much to teach us in the matter of the interpretation and practice of what are usually known as the passive virtues. The people of India have been much bewildered by the activity of the peoples of the West, and many even of its best men have been but little impressed even with their works of charity and social service. But they seldom fail to be impressed by the exercise of virtues like forbearance, long-suffering, non-resistance to evil, calmness of temper, and unselfishness. So far as Christian morality is concerned, the lives of nominally Christian people may, on the whole, have impressed them but little, but the ethical teaching of Jesus, particularly as it is found in the Sermon on the Mount, has found a response in many quarters. There may be a wide difference in the ways by which the Hindu and the Christian have come to appreciate such virtues, and in the motives which they believe to underlie them. There may even be a great difference between the virtues themselves as understood by Hindu and Christian respectively. But that is not the important thing. What is

here maintained is that there has been developed in India a spirit to which certain elements in our Western ethical teaching make an appeal, and which, if properly directed, may be capable of making more explicit, both in practice and theory, the significance of these elements in a well-rounded moral life.

Attention may here be drawn to one virtue of a passive kind which has for long occupied a high place in Hindu morality—that of *ahiṁsā*—a term in which is gathered up all that is connoted by 'harmlessness' in the individual's dealings with sentient beings. It is a curious thing that so little attention has been given up till recent times to this side of human conduct in our Western discussions of morality, and that so little protection should have been afforded in Western lands by legislation to the lower animals. It is no less remarkable that the impulse both to a more adequate theoretical treatment of the subject and to a greater considerateness in practice should have come chiefly from the side of Utilitarianism, which in its presentation of the moral end as pleasure was led logically to a recognition of the pleasure of the lower animals as of equal value with that of man, in so far as it is pleasant. Here again the origin of the idea is not what is of first importance. It may have been in its origin bound up with the idea of transmigration, or it may have been, as Dr. Rabindranath Tagore says, the outcome of 'the sentiment of universal sympathy for life',[1] or it may have sprung from some quite different impulse. Nor is it of the greatest importance that there are crudities in its actual practice in India—that it has taken forms so largely negative, the chief emphasis being laid on the mere avoidance of destroying life, apart from considerations of well-being in life; or that it has been given a position of false importance in relation to other virtues. What is here contended for is that in the history of Western ethics too little attention has been devoted to the lower animals in their relation to human conduct. It is to the credit of Hindu

[1] *Sādhanā*, p. 9.

thought that it has, both in its legal and philosophical formulations, found a place for the duty of man towards the whole sentient creation. It may be that there shall come from India a stimulus to a more thorough treatment of this subject.

We cannot leave the doctrine of *karma*, which has been criticized, we believe with justice, as marking one of the weakest points in the whole system of Hindu thought, without giving due recognition to what in it has real value. It will be recognized that the doctrine owes its far-reaching influence and its marvellous vitality to the elements of truth which underlie it. It is based on a conviction of the immense significance of all human activity. In the form in which it has been most widely accepted it has been found to be false and misleading, chiefly because it has been associated with fantastic eschatological conceptions, because it has been applied unethically, and because it has been conceived as operating in a hard, mechanical way. In the earliest formulations of Buddhist doctrine, it was presented in a form in which it was still open to most of the main objections which may be offered to it in its Hindu garb, but it was at least shown to be capable of a more strictly ethical application. And so far as it is the expression of a deeply-rooted conviction that there is something in human conduct to the import of which no limits can be set, we must regard it as a conception of great and permanent value. It may be that in this conception Hindu thought has no great independent contribution to make to the thought of the world. It is no uniquely conceived idea, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. But it is a fact of great practical importance that Hindu thinkers should have recognized it, and applied it with such thoroughness, however mistaken may have been the specific forms which this application has taken.

These are but a few of the most important ways in which we believe that Hindu thought has a contribution to make to the general ethical thought of the world. They have been

merely touched on here, but the subject is capable of almost indefinite development. But the conviction must be expressed that if those things which are true and good in Hindu ethics and morality are to have the place and influence which they ought to have, it must be in relation to a system of thought more satisfying than any that has so far found acceptance in India. There are those who think otherwise. There is common in India at the present time an eclecticism which would embrace all religions and all philosophies. Even a thinker like Max Müller, after expressing sympathy with the famous saying of Schopenhauer regarding the Vedānta, 'It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death,' goes on to say, 'a man may be a Platonist, and yet be a good citizen and an honest Christian, and I should say the same of a Vedāntist.'[1] Now it may be asserted, and some considerations will be found in the foregoing chapters that will help to bear out the assertion, that there is a deep division between the Vedānta and the Christian conceptions of reality. The Vedānta philosophy and Christian doctrine may have some implications that are alike, notably in the matter of the passive virtues; but Christianity is not simply Vedāntism plus something more, nor can Christian thought be simply combined with Vedāntist. This is a point regarding which it is well that we should be clear. There are other systems of thought which take us much nearer to the Christian point of view, but in most of them, and in most even of the best expressions of popular religion, there is to be seen the influence of what one might call the Vedāntic view of life, preventing the development of a strenuous moral life. The most thoughtful people of India have been coming more and more to realize the importance of an active social morality, and with that the need for a philosophy and a religion that will furnish adequate intellectual and emotional grounds for it. The only sure ground for this is, on the intellectual side, in a philosophy which recognizes the place of moral ideals in the

[1] *Six Systems*, p. 193.

very constitution of the Universe, and, on the practical side, in a religion which is in line with such a philosophy. We believe that Christianity is such a religion, and we believe that the religious thought which has inspired the highest morality in connexion with some of the developments of the Bhakti movement, and in connexion with some modern movements, is that in which the idea of God has approximated most closely to the Christian idea.

EPILOGUE

THE HINDU AND THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

IN the course of the foregoing discussion comparison has frequently been made of the Hindu and the Western points of view in regard to the ethical problem. It may be helpful if we try, even at the risk of repetition, to bring together some of the features in which the Hindu ethic differs from the distinctively Christian ethic. In doing this we do not intend to discuss again any of the great determinative conceptions of Hindu thought. It is intended rather to draw attention to more general differences in attitude to the ethical question, and in particular to try to make clear, so far as that is possible in a brief chapter, the rationale of the Christian ethic.

When we speak of Hindu and Christian ethics it is important that we should recognize the significance of the fact that they are systems integrally related with religion. There are systems of ethics that have been formulated without reference to religion. Any fully developed system involves or implies some theory of the Universe, but it may be a theory in which no place is provided for what in strictness can be called the religious attitude. When we have an ethic bound up with a religion, it generally possesses certain characteristic features. All religions offer to man some kind of deliverance or salvation from evil, though the nature of the evil and of the deliverance to be attained are variously conceived ; and the ethic will have some relation to these conceptions. Again, philosophies are for the few, religions for the many, and the morality inculcated by the latter is supported by motives which will appeal to the popular mind. Connected with this is the further fact that a religious ethic generally has intermingled with it elements

that are not strictly ethical. In religion we are, of course, carried into a sphere of experience that goes beyond the merely ethical. It is not that fact to which reference is made, but rather to the fact that within the sphere of conduct there are generally prescribed observances which could not be justified on purely ethical grounds.

Christianity and Hinduism are, then, both religions offering ways of salvation, and the ethical teaching of both is related, though in different ways, to their conceptions of salvation. In Hinduism the various forms of conduct that are prescribed are thought of most usually as helping the soul on its way to the attainment of deliverance. In Christianity, on the other hand, the moral life is thought of rather as part of the expression of the life of him who has found salvation. This is a very far-reaching difference.

The greater part of the practical side of Hinduism is summed up in the word *dharma*. There is an externality about the Hindu conception of *dharma* which is lacking to the morality of Christianity. As we have already seen, the details of *dharma* are not deduced from the end which is set before the soul, nor can their relation to the end be made clear. In the case of Christianity the moral life stands in the most immediate and intimate relation to the highest good. The Old Testament had its elaborate system of *dharma*, but so far as it was external Jesus swept it aside, emphasizing the inner, spiritual elements half-concealed within it—'Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you.' Mere ritual and ceremonial observances He rejected, and the Pharisees, the people who followed them most rigidly, were the objects of His most severe denunciation. They were a people who made clean merely the outside of the platter. Even the Sabbath, an institution which had been of so great spiritual value to the Jewish people, became an evil when its observance came between them and the higher service of mercy. 'It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.'

Hinduism has, properly speaking, no New Testament, and it is hard to see how there could be got from its essential principles a Gospel which would express itself in life in works of love and mercy such as Jesus sought of His disciples. Progress towards the end, so far as this is attained through spiritual discipline, is achieved through withdrawal from the business of life in which the opportunities for service present themselves. This may seem to be a sweeping statement, but its truth may be tested practically. Is there any record in the annals of Hinduism up to modern times of any great religious movement which found its chief expression in a pure yet active social morality? Is there anything comparable to the movement which St. Francis of Assisi initiated and led? It is not denied that there have been many who have ceased to put their trust in *dharma* as a system of ritual, but have they found a new and deeper *dharma* to take its place, a *dharma* which is the free expression of a religion of active good-will towards men?

This carries us on to another point. One of the dominating conceptions in the teaching of Jesus is that of the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God. Salvation, from one point of view, means admission to this Kingdom. The conception of the Kingdom is one that has deep roots in the history of Jewish thought, and that has many and wide implications. But, looking at it simply from the ethical point of view, we are impressed by the meaning which it lends to the life of every day. Jesus spoke of a spiritual world which was not foreign to the world in which we live. The Kingdom of Heaven He declared to be not something away in the clouds, not something that might be attained at the end of a long and weary journey.

> The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within (or among) you.

The members of the Kingdom are not a people dwelling in monasteries, or in the forest, but a people who live among

their fellows, manifesting to them in all their dealings, even the most ordinary and commonplace, that good-will of God which has come to them through Jesus Christ. For the world is God's world, and His is the rule. Men may have wandered in ways of selfishness and passion and unkindness, but for all who turn from these ways there is a way into all the privileges of the Kingdom. Jesus did not teach that men may enter the Kingdom as a reward of well-doing; what He did teach was that the Kingdom was there present with them for all to enter whose desire was after God. In its life they would find the inspiration and the strength for all good living.

This is an idea that Hindus generally find difficult to understand. It is not easy for them to see how a man can be in the truest sense a religious man while living in the world and engaging in its business. As a matter of fact, it is simply an aspect of the fact that heaven and earth are in the closest relationship, so that the seen and temporal are not simply the negation of the unseen and eternal. In our ethical activity we are in touch with reality; for the ideals by which it is determined are not simply counsels of prudence having a limited applicability, but principles which enter into the very fibre of the Universe. This is a thought to which St. Paul gives expression when he says that 'Our citizenship is in heaven'. We belong, that is to say, to a Society which transcends all earthly and temporal limitations. The end of man is not in silence and inactivity, but in active membership of a great, eternal Society, and the principles which ought to dominate our conduct in our relations with our fellow men in the world are the eternal principles of this Society. It is on these lines that we must understand the saying of Christ, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.' By this He meant that His followers should realize their membership of the Kingdom not by turning aside from all the activities of the world, but by bringing the principles of the Kingdom to bear on all their activity in the world, not by the subduing

of desire, but by the direction of desire in accordance with His mind.

This is a thought which finds expression in some way in all that Jesus teaches regarding human conduct. He condemns pride and covetousness and lust with all the earnestness of any Hindu teacher, but the motive is different. In Hindu teaching these are generally thought of as strengthening that conviction of individuality in cherishing which the soul is drawn away from its true being. In the teaching of Jesus they are thought of as impeding the development of a true individuality through which the highest ends of the Universe may be realized. The subduing of selfishness and passion is then something which in itself has merely negative value. In itself it counts for but little. The best life is that which is lived under the inspiration of a love which issues in the active service of others, seeking for them those things that make for the realization of the richest individuality. Accordingly we find Jesus saying things that have surprised not only Hindus but many others who have conceived the religious life as something essentially other-worldly. One of the most remarkable of these sayings is that connected with His great picture of the Judgement. There the most terrible condemnation is not declared to be the portion of the actively wicked, but of those who have simply done nothing.

> Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that Jesus nowhere teaches that through the active doing of good works merit is acquired by which one may earn salvation. Good works are the fruit, not the root of the tree, and their significance

lies not in themselves, but in the spirit to which they give expression.

It should be observed, further, that there is no indefiniteness about the nature of the beneficent activity which Jesus commends. We are all being constantly reminded of the fact that there is a great deal of benevolence which is extraordinarily ill-directed. Many works of charity have served only to aggravate the evils which they have sought to alleviate. In the teaching of Jesus there is no encouragement given to such ill-directed activity. One of His sayings, recorded in the fourth Gospel, undoubtedly expresses the spirit of His teaching: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it in abundance.' He sought for each individual the realization to the fullest of his selfhood. And if this statement seems still to be indefinite, we would draw attention again to the sphere within which the self exercises its activity—a kingdom, or, as it is sometimes put, a family. The general nature of the obligations which rest on one who lives within such an organization is clear enough. There is the duty of mutual love and service, with all that this involves of sincerity, faithfulness, patience, self-restraint, and a multitude of other virtues.

As has been frequently said in previous chapters, there is in Hinduism no philosophy of conduct. We are given no principle by reference to which the value of actions may be determined. Nor, indeed, could such a principle be given, for there is very little trace of any belief that activity of any kind can contribute directly to the attainment of the *summum bonum*. We are here face to face with a profound philosophical question regarding the nature of reality. People sometimes talk in a loose way about the philosophy of the Christian religion, understanding the religion to be a philosophy. As a matter of fact, religion is prior to philosophy, and when we speak of the philosophy of a religion we mean a philosophy which justifies or finds a place for the conceptions with which the religion works. Now, Hindu religion, even in its theistic

expressions, is involved with a view of reality which is incompatible with the Christian conception of individuality. In the loftiest expressions of Hindu theism it is true that individuality is no longer thought of as a limitation as it is in the philosophy of the Vedānta. But even in them, when individuality has been conceived as having a place in the eternal constitution of the Universe, it is an individuality which is not essentially active. It finds its true being in a relationship with God of an emotional and contemplative kind, and there is no place for the conception of a society of individuals with which it has manifold relationships. It is only when we come to such modern writers as Dr. Rabindranath Tagore that we find the conception of realization through activity grasped with any clearness, and even with him the idea finds only uncertain expression. The conception of the Kingdom of God is one in relation to which human personality receives meaning, and in relation to which its activity in the world is invested with eternal significance. The conviction may be expressed here that some such conception is essential as a basis for the highest ethic. The West has been fruitful in ethical theories, various in form. But almost all of them have been formulated as attempts at the solution of the problem of the meaning of the active morality which men practise imperfectly in their relations with each other in society. The solutions offered may be divided broadly into two classes. There are those theories which regard the end as something external to the means, and there are those which regard end and means as standing in the most intimate relationship to each other. According to the latter view the individual who lives the moral life is finding himself, not in the sense that his good deeds will bear fruit to his profit, but in the sense that in such activity a self which has eternal value finds one of the lines of its true expression. Hinduism has no philosophy of morality, nor are there hints of such a philosophy in its religious literature. Men may travel to a certain length in the moral life without a philosophy or with a false philosophy, but the only sure basis of a satisfactory

morality is a view of life, whether philosophically formulated or naïvely held, in which the eternal worth of individuality is recognized. This is the significance of the Christian conception of the Kingdom of God regarded from the strictly ethical standpoint.

In this exposition certain points of great importance have been left out of account, but they will perhaps be more readily understood after what has been said. There is no thought in the mind of Jesus of morality apart from God. He sought that men should be perfect as their Father. Man's kinship to God, who is represented most truly as the Father of men, is the great motive to moral attainment. It is only the pure in heart who can see Him, and by purity of heart is meant not the spirit that leads a man away from all the activities of the world, but the spirit of childlike simplicity and sincerity, of unselfishness, and of love, by which is determined the purest human conduct. In many ways Jesus shows how the fatherhood of God implies the brotherhood of man, so that devotion to God issues in the service of man. As the other side of all this we have the Christian attitude to sin. It is the great positive evil from which man needs deliverance. It is a positive evil, because it is not merely shortcoming, it is not something with merely negative significance; it is something which comes between man and God, marring their fellowship. In the teaching of Jesus we find no trace of that morbid concentration on sin which has been not uncommon in certain types of Christians at different periods in the history of Christianity. Yet the fact of sin is insisted on as something that does not cease to be when it is simply ignored, but as a fact with which one has to reckon. Accordingly, of all the words that Jesus spoke regarding human life and conduct, those that impressed His hearers most deeply, whether they believed Him or not, were the words in which He proclaimed the forgiveness of sins. In the Jewish consciousness His words regarding sin found an echo, and there were many to whom His words about forgiveness came as a message from God.

This has been stated in its simplest terms and without reference to some of the most distinctive elements in the teaching of Jesus regarding sin and its forgiveness. But it is well that we should pause at this point and consider the significance of these thoughts for the moral life. Let it be remembered that we are not here dealing with a philosophical theory, but with certain facts of experience which may be capable of being interpreted or justified in accordance with the principles of more than one philosophical system. But certain things are posited. It is assumed that the Universe is morally constituted, that God is an ethical Being in whose fellowship man finds the true end of his being, that in the attainment of this end there is no way, either through knowledge or through feeling, by which man can overleap the ethical, and that sin is a hindrance to the entrance into this fellowship which can be removed only through forgiveness. The Christian message is in one of its essentials a message of forgiveness by the grace of God, mediated through Christ, and this forgiveness is not simply a cancelling of the penalties of sin, but above all the reconciling of the soul to God through the removal of the cause of estrangement.

These are ideas which have never come to clear conception in Hinduism. The Hindu mind has not thought of God as an ethical personality. We have seen that it was on the way to doing so in the *Ṛig Veda*, especially in certain conceptions which it formed regarding Varuṇa. We have seen in many places, almost throughout the whole range of Hindu literature, the expression of thoughts regarding sin, but it has not usually been ethically understood, nor has it been related to a conception of God as ethically holy. In some of the literature of *bhakti* we seem to come nearer to the Christian standpoint, but even there the idea lingers that God is Himself beyond good and evil, and that when His worshipper finds Him, he too is carried beyond the ethical; indeed, neither in seeking nor in possessing is it recognized that the claims of the ethical are indefeasible. The idea of forgiveness is no foreign one.

S

Wherever the fact of sin is admitted, there is to be found at the same time belief in means by which men may be loosed from it or from its effects. Frequently in these beliefs we are very far from the idea of forgiveness as it is understood ethically, but there are expressions in the literature of *bhakti* which seem on the face of them to bring us nearer to a true appreciation of its ethical character. There is, for example, the famous passage in the *Bhagavadgītā*:

> Even though he should be a doer of exceeding evil that worships Me with undivided worship, he shall be deemed good: for he is of right purpose.
>
> Speedily he becomes righteous of soul, and comes to lasting peace. O son of Kunti, be assured that none who is devoted to Me is lost.[1]

We have here the idea of the grace of God as available to man even when he has a record that is evil, provided only he turn to God with singleness of purpose. But the free operation of this idea has been to a large extent inhibited by another idea, that of *karma*. The Hindu mind has found it difficult to get away from the belief that this principle is dominant in the direction of the destiny of the man who is engaged in the active life of the world, and even in the *Bhagavadgītā* the idea remains that he who finds deliverance realizes his true being, not in social activity pursued with a purified will, but in an ecstatic union with God in which the ethical is transcended. There are texts which might be used in contradiction of this statement, and their force, when they are taken by themselves, would have to be admitted. But the teaching of the work as a whole is full of ambiguities, and we are justified in maintaining at least that the idea of forgiveness in the sense in which it enters into Christian thought does not find clear and unambiguous expression.

The Christian attitude to sin and forgiveness is emphasized because of the extraordinary value which it has for the practical moral life. Setting aside the great question of the

[1] *Bhagavadgītā*, ix. 30, 31.

philosophical explanation which these beliefs are capable of, we cannot fail to be impressed with the reinforcement which is given to the moral life by the belief that the individual in his practical life is in touch with eternal realities, so that the good man is working in harmony with the Spirit of the Universe, while the bad man is found to be fighting against the Spirit of God. This belief by itself would suggest nothing but despair to the evil man, but for the doctrine of the grace of God, through which the evil man may be reconciled to Him, and his will may be renewed so that it may be brought into conformity with God's will.

The careful reader will have come to realize, in the course of his study of this work, that according to the view set forth in it the Hindu ethic is in certain important ways fundamentally different from that of Christianity, resting as it does on presuppositions which are different. It is not intended to elaborate this point further, but it is well that, in conclusion, attention should be unambiguously directed to it. In Hinduism, let it be said again, there are two principles which have never been satisfactorily related to each other. There is Hindu philosophy, which in all its varieties of form has provided a basis only for a quietistic ethic, furnishing no basis for the direction of the active life of men in society. There is, on the other hand, the system of *dharma*, cold, rigid, and lifeless, resting on no great fundamental principle, of doubtful utility even in the judgement of some of the great philosophical thinkers of India. If the people of India were content to remain behind in the march of human progress, seeking only those ends which the great teachers of the past have set before them, they might find in it a way of life by which they might traverse this present evil world. But there is no evidence that India desires so to be left behind, nor is there evidence that her people are satisfied with the goal that they have been taught to seek, nor with the conditions under which it is believed to be attainable. Nor, again, can those who are at the same time morally earnest and intellectually alive find either intellectual or practical satisfac-

tion in a morality resting on such a heterogeneous basis. As a matter of fact, the most earnest minds in India have discarded much that belongs to traditional Hinduism, and are seeking in many directions after a more satisfying religion and philosophy. Most of them are seeking, naturally, for a position in which shall be united what they believe to be essential in their old beliefs with something which will justify them in their active moral endeavour. Whatever they may make of this task, it seems clear at least that it will involve a reinterpretation of much that has been regarded by Hindus themselves as belonging to the very essence of their religious thought and practice, in such a way that it cannot amount to less than a radical transformation.

The Christian ethic, on the other hand, rests on a foundation which makes the facts of our ethical experience intelligible. The basis is the eternal love of God to His creatures. The whole of Christian doctrine is nothing more than an exposition of the way in which this love has been and is operative in God's dealings with men. It is believed that a purpose of love runs through the whole Universe, that the history of human strivings, hopes, and aspirations is not something that is in the end meaningless and outside the scope of God's purposes, but that the cry of man for richer and fuller life is a cry which God has inspired and which He is willing to answer.

INDEX